SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

BY

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EXT - ST. LAURENT MILITARY GRAVEYARD - LATE SPRING - DAY

A family, consisting of a MAN and a WOMAN in their early forties, and four CHILDREN, ranging in age from seven to twenty, are following a hunched over OLD MAN with white, tuffy hair.

ANGLE - IN FRONT OF FAMILY

The old man passes CAMERA, and we get our first good look at the family. With the exception of the seven-year-old, all of them are anxiously anticipating a reaction.

High hedgerows prevent any other view except to guide the elderly person who is just now following the pathway that jogs to the right.

It is at that moment, the elderly person stops in his tracks, as if hitting an invisible brick wall. His breathing quickens and it's obvious to the family (because they start running the fifty yards to catch him) that his legs are giving out.

ANGLE - ELDERLY MAN AND FAMILY

He falls to his knees. But he can't take his eyes off...

CAMERA TRACKING WITH FAMILY

The middle aged couple embraces the old man and the CAMERA SWINGS AROUND to witness what stopped the elderly man in his tracks and punched the wind out of his lungs...

A LANDSCAPE OF WHITE CROSSES WITH THE OCCASSIONAL STAR OF DAVID.

So vast that it spans your peripheral vision and carries your eye acres and acres up a gently rolling hill. It looks like the entire world died and was buried up here.

OUR FIRST CLOSE UP - ELDERLY MAN

He could be anyone's father or grandfather. Nothing very memorable about his face, except those eyes...that have seen too much...and, perhaps for the first time in fifty-five years, are suddenly seeing it all again.

CAMERA SLOWLY PUSHES IN ON THAT FACE...THOSE EYES

ELDERLY MAN'S POV

A geometerically straight line of crosses, as far as the eye can just about see.

SMASH MATCH CUT TO:

A LESS THAN PERFECT LINE OF BELGIAN GATES

Beach obstacles made of steel crossbars welded into an X-shape...almost as far as the eye can see. Columns of water are leaping into the air as shells EXPLODE IN THE SURF -- we're in the midst of a MASSIVE NAVAL BOMBARDMENT.

SUPER TITLE:

OMAHA BEACH 0615 HOURS THE ALLIED ARMADA

Is nothing less than stunning in scope. Almost as many battleships, cruisers, mine sweepers, destroyers, troop carriers, as there were graves at St. Laurent. And every one of them seems to be FIRING ITS GUNS.

THE HIGGINS BOATS

200 of them head for shore in the first wave -- unglamorous, utilitarian, flat-bottom landing craft. Each holds a platoon of 30 men (or 12 plus a jeep).

EXT. LEAD HIGGINS BOAT - DAWN

Madness. The flat bow of the boat crashes into the swell, sending up squalls of spray.

IN THE HIGGINS BOAT

Water pouring in with every swell. Men puking, moaning. Smashing and tumbling into each other. Bailing with their helmets.

SPR 16

A FIFTEEN INCH NAVAL SHELL STREAKS

Over their heads, LIFTING THE HIGGINS BOAT ALMOST OUT OF THE WATER. Sucking the air from the men's lungs. It slams into the unseen shore ahead.

THE CAMERA MOVES PAST THE MEN

Grim. They know they're close. Only a few have anything left to puke. Many of them are praying. A young soldier, DELANCEY, tries to get a peek over the gunwale at the Higgins Boat directly off their port side.

DELANCEY'S POV

At that exact moment, that landing craft hits a mine.

A HUGE EXPLOSION

Of fuel, fire, and human parts. Delancey falls back, and you

Know he's going to lose it, as the debris from the exploded companion boat rains down on all the men. Flaming oil and body parts cascade over everyone and everything.

The men stop bailing, using the water to put out the flames. All of them screaming out their reactions.

A FIGURE

Pushes in front of his men. CAPTAIN JOHN MILLER. Late thirties, by far the oldest man on the craft. Relaxed, battle-hardened, ignoring the hell around him.

MILLER
Look at me! Everyone look at me!

The entire Higgins boat lights up from above. Everyone looks up as ANOTHER HUGE SHELL SCREAMS OVERHEAD from a battleship.

MILLER
(yelling)
Don't look there, look here!

DELANCEY
Captain, are we all gonna die?

LIEUTENANT BRIGGS hollers back...

BRIGGS
Hell no, Delancey. Two-thirds, tops.

DELANCEY
Oh, Jesus...

BRIGGS
Every one of you look at the man on your left. Now look at the man on your right. Feel sorry for those two sons of bitches, they're gonna get it, you're not gonna get a scratch.

MILLER
Lieutenant Briggs, are you finished reassuring the men!?!

Briggs backs off. Miller grabs Delancey, points toward the beach.

MILLER (CONT'D)
See that? That's what's known as a shitstorm. By the time the Navy's done, there's not gonna be a German left.

REIBEN, a kid from New York toting a B.A.R., speaks up:

REIBEN
I hope somebody mentioned that to the Germans.

MILLER
The biggest problem we're gonna have getting up that beach is looking like a bunch of tourists. Embarrass the folks back home.

DELANCEY
(dubious, hopeful)
You think?

MILLER
I got Eisenhower's personal guarantee.

A few, including Delancey, manage thin smiles. Miller looks over the gunwale at the HELL IN FRONT OF THEM.

PAN DOWN TO MILLER'S HAND

It quivers. Miller glances around to see that none of the men have noticed. He stares at his hand as if it belongs to someone else. It stops shaking. He turns his eyes back to the objective.

SERGEANT MICHAEL HORVATH (SARGE) appears at his side, tactful enough not to notice.

SARGE
Eisenhower, huh?

At that moment, THE NAVAL BARRAGE LIFTS. UNCANNY SILENCE descends as the big guns readjust to fire inland. Everybody gazes up, knowing this is it, waiting for the final cue.

BRIGGS
Go LCTs! Light 'em up!

There are 14 LCT ships positioned offshore. <u>They all fire their rocket batteries at once, a thousand from each ship.</u> It's a stunning sight. The men gaze up as 14,000 rockets pass overhead and impact on the beach in less than a minute.

It seems impossible that anything could live through it.

The first of the Higgins boats heave through the swells, nearing shore. The beach ahead is eerily silent, shrouded with smoke. Maybe the Germans <u>are</u> beaten. Some GIs are even climbing up on the engine room deckings to check out the view.

Closer. Getting closer...

ANGLE ON BEACH

...and finally touching France. The ramps start dropping...

...and that's when the real shitstorm hits. The German forces have actually taken very few losses, and they OPEN FIRE with everything they've got. GERMAN ARTILLERY AND MACHINE GUNS pour enfilading fire into the killing zone from the bluffs and ravines above, from every crag and foxhole, every bunker and pillbox. The result is murderous and stunning:

THE AMERICANS

Are getting shot to pieces in a hell of screaming confusion. Few men even make it out of the surf -- they stumble, tumble, become floating corpses. Those that do make it to the sand are dying a cross-fire hail of bullets and artillery.

MILLER'S BOAT

Is headed straight into this hell. Tracers rip the haze. Explosions pound the surf, throwing columns of water toward the sky.

THE COXSWAIN

Is a scared, 18 year-old Navy kid. He throttles back, cutting speed. Miller hollers from the bow:

MILLER
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

COXSWAIN
As far as I go!

Miller races toward the stern, pushing through his men:

MILLER
All the way in, goddamn it! You take us all the way in!

COXSWAIN
I can't even see the marker flags.

Miller reaches the coxswain, lunges up into his face:

MILLER
All they way in! You're not going to drown my men!

COXSWAIN
I get hung up on a sandbar, we're never getting out of this!

Miller stuns everybody by pulling his .45 automatic from his holster, jacking a round into the chamber, and jamming the gun into the coxswain's nose.

MILLER
I don't need you to take us in...but I'd like you to!

The kid immediately throttles forward, heading in.

The men are hearing tick-tick-tack-tack, like a pattering of hail growing more intense, or like rocks dropping into a tin can. They realize it's MACHINE GUN BULLETS hitting the front of the landing ramp like evil little devils knocking on the door to be let in. When the ramp drops, they will.

The men start shying back with mounting horror, trying to crowd to the sides even though there's nowhere to go.

That's when Miller's boat runs aground on a sandbar. The coxswain jams it into reverse, then forward, trying desperately to pull it off.

COXSWAIN
Sandbar!

MILLER
Closer!

COXSWAIN
SANDBAR!

The coxswain is suddenly hit by machine gun bullets. He SLAMS so quickly out of frame that, were it not for the lingering cloud of red mist, we wouldn't even know he had been there.

Miller, left wearing a fine spray of blood like warpaint, turns to his men. There's nothing left to do but...

MILLER
SIDE OF THE RAMP! SIDE OF THE RAMP!

SARGE
(to his men)
Don't bunch up! Wanna see plenty a' beach between men!

A WAR CRY

Arises from the throats of the men. So seasick is everyone, the beach is like a cure. An instense swirl of emotions verging on insanity. And in the back of every mind is a desperate little voice saying: it can't happen to me...

The tick-tick-tack-tack on the front of the ramp sounds like a hailstorm now. The devils want in.

The ramp comes down.

IT'S A SLAUGHTER CLOSE UP - MILLER

Metal minutiae, pink and gray matter, smoke and sparks explode past Miller in all directions.

MILLER'S POV

Triangulated .30 caliber machine gun fire rains into the boat like God's wrath itself, chewing screaming GIs to pieces.

Miller can only see the backs of all his men. But the heavy caliber slugs, as they pass through the men, are not so much throwing back blood, but canteen shrapnel, sections of shovel, canvas, and rubber from rended Mae Wests.

In less than twenty seconds, some two-thirds of the men are piled into each other, dead or dying.

A dozen survivors make it over the corpses of their comrades to the ramp and throw themselves into the water. Bringing up the rear is:

MILLER

Go! Go!

Miller grabs a screaming Private Delancey by the backpack and pulls him to his feet from a tangle of bodies, inadvertently saving his life by inches as BULLETS CHEW that spot.

MILLER AND DELANCEY

Plunge into the deep water to the left of the sandbar...

UNDERWATER

...and sink like rocks into a WATERY NIGHTMARE WORLD. The sights and sounds are surreal. Drowned soldiers are sinking around us in the murk. Contrails of blood from multiple puncture wounds, some still thrashing weakly as their lungs give out, expelling blood and air. All manner of equipment and gear is tumbling down as far as the eye can see. Rifles are sinking, helmets are going down.

A Higgins boat with its engine THRUMMING eerily passes right near us, its prow pushing through dead soldiers.

Most ominous of all, the surface itself is roiling as if hammered by rain. Machine gun bullets piercing the water

Leave fizzy lines for a straight five feet before settling gently on the murky, sandy bottom.

DELANCEY

Struggles, trying to undo the straps of his heavy pack. Miller's in the same desperate trouble -- his pack is dragging him down.

Miller pulls his knife, slashes his own straps, dumps his pack. He grabs Delancey, who's panicking, losing all his air. Miller manages to cut him loose, dragging him up toward --

THE SURFACE

As the CAMERA FOLLOWS Delancey and Miller, we see less and less of them as they break surface. Following them, the CAMERA EMERGES from the silent shallows and into the chaos of Omaha Beach. Burning water. Exploding shells. Bullets flying. Screams of war. Delancey's clinging to him, gasping --

DELANCEY
--cap'n--jesus--thanks--

-- and a stream of bullets slam into his back. He arches in Miller's grasp, dead on his feet with a slack look of surprise.

Miller is pinned in two feet of water by Delancey's body. He starts struggling/paddling towards shore. Delancey's body takes seven or eight more hits, jerking about violently in Miller's grasp. Miller looks like a man who's wondering if this wouldn't be a good time to go insane.

He looks around, realizing he's not the only one. There are scores of men out here from any number of boats doing the same thing: working their way grimly toward shore, some using corpses for cover...past tangled and burning wreckage...past wave-tossed bodies...past hundreds of dead fish that keep washing ashore...

Miller throws himself behind another Belgian gate. He presses against it for dear life as MACHINE GUN BULLETS hammer the metal, throwing massive sparks. Suddenly:

WHAM! AN ARTILLERY SHELL EXPLODES right behind him, knocking him flat with a hammerblow of concussion and debris. Abrupt silence. We suddenly can't hear a thing. All sounds of battle are gone, sucked away in a vacuum as:

MILLER

Rises slowly, deeply disoriented and bleeding from a dozen shrapnel cuts, holding the Belgian gate for support. His gaze

Is blank as a blown fuse, with a look that says: I'm done. No more captain, no more army, no more nothing. Just let me crawl into my basket and stay there.

Hundreds of bodies litter the beach before him. Countless wounded are moaning, thrashing, calling for help (though we can't hear them). The sand is a carpet of discarded weapons and equipment. A SHERMAN TANK burns furiously, muzzle cocked mutely, greasy black smoke roiling toward the sky.

Miller looks in one direction, sees FOUR MEN loaded down with packs racing from the surf. They stumble, tumble, die...

Miller looks around, trying to shake his disorientation -- the faces of wounded and dying seem to be everywhere, like a nightmare landscape of Edvard Munch paintings. They're screaming at the sky, calling to God, one man mouthing "Momma, Momma" over and over again -- all of it silent.

Miller suddenly realizes there's a PRIVATE staring at him from a beach obstacle a few yards away. The kid looks like he's waiting for a reply. So do the THREE PRIVATES sharing his cover. SOUND STARTS RETURNING, faint but growing louder as:

MILLER
Huh? You say something?

PRIVATE #1
Yeah! Are you an officer?

Miller shakes his head, trying to get his hearing back, trying to clear the cobwebs:

MILLER
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

PRIVATE
I SAID, ARE YOU A GODDAMN OFFICER?

Miller has to think about it a moment, finally nods:

MILLER
Yeah!

Beat. The privates trade glances.

PRIVATE #2
Well? What the hell do we do now, sir?

Miller sees there are others out here like him -- hanging on by their fingertips, looking more like shipwreck victims than soldiers, but alive.

SOUND RETURNS COMPLETELY as we hear:

SARGE (O.S.)
Captain! Captain!

Miller turns, sees Horvath under cover a distance away. He's been shouting all this time:

SARGE (CONT'D)
Shingle!

Miller turns to look where Sarge is pointing. About 200 meters up the beach near the base of the German cliffs is the "shingle" -- a low seawall of rocks and sand topped with barbed wire. Hundreds of GIs are already up there in ragged groups -- digging foxholes, keeping low, tending wounded.

Miller turns and hollers at a private:

MILLER
You!
(pointing)
There! Go!

A Sherman tank crashes out of the waves behind him, FIRING as it hits the beach. Miller breaks from cover --

STEADICAM WITH MILLER

-- and DOZENS OF MEN seem to emerge from nowhere, following his lead.

They're crossing No-Man's-Land in the face of withering enemy fire just like their fathers did a war ago...using shell holes as foxholes...scrambling on hands and knees...scrambling on hands and knees...leap-frogging positions...using knocked-out tanks for cover...doing some serious broken-field running...

Grabbing up discarded weapons or helping a wounded friend as they go...

Many are brutally cut down, simply dropping as their legs stop working. But more men swell the ranks along the way, popping out of shell holes or rising from amongst the dead, joining the exodus to the seawall.

MILLER'S POV

So many of the men are so burdened down with gear and ammunition that they can barely walk. One YOUNG BOY is taking off all of his gear and helps another to rip off his. Now down to tank tops and trousers, both men pass...

A GUY WITH A FLAMETHROWER. When...

WHOMP! Small arms fire hits the flamethrower's cannister and a burst of flames gush out, engulfing the two running men.

All three, fully immolated now, are cut mercifully down by machine gun fire.

Miller dives behind another Belgian gate, finding Lieutenant Briggs wounded on the sand.

BRIGGS
...Get me back... get me back...

MILLER

Grabs him by his pack harness, starts to drag him. An EXPLOSION throws him off his feet. Sensing he's not wounded, Miller gets up...but Briggs seems a lot lighter. Miller looks down to see that he is only carrying half of him.

Sarge catches up, slams into him/grabs his collar/propels him along, both men hobbling that last dozen yards to --

THE SHINGLE

-- where they hurl themselves exhausted to the ground. Many soldiers making it off the beach are likewise tossing themselves to safety up and down the seawall ---- but "safety" is a relative term. The Germans are raining MACHINE GUN AND MORTAR FIRE all along this position. The noise and chaos are incredible. Casualties are mounting.

CLOSE-UPS: Miller sees a lot of faces staring at him. Stripped of gear, huddling under scant cover, many wounded, they look exactly like what they are -- a bunch of scared kids.

JPP 1166

MILLER
Who's in command here?

SOLDIER #1
You!

That's what Miller was afraid of. He looks to Sarge:

MILLER
You recognize where we are?

SARGE
About a mile from where we're supposed to be?

SOLDIER #2
Nobody's where we're supposed to be!

Miller looks around, seeing a ragged mix of regiments and companies. He spots a RADIOMAN in the chaos, his back to us, yelling into a field phone. Miller scrambles to him, grabs his

Shoulder, pulls his face into view --

MILLER
ASK ABOUT OUR AIR SUPPORT? TELL 'EM WE HAVE NO AIR SUPPORT!

-- the radioman turns away, relaying the message. Miller grabs his shoulder again, brings his face around a second time --

MILLER (CONT'D)
AND TELL 'EM WE HAVE NO ARMOR! TANKS! THEY'RE NOWHERE NEAR THE DRAWS!

-- the radioman turns away, hollering into the phone. Miller grabs him yet a third time --

MILLER (CONT'D)
AND TELL 'EM--

-- and pulls him around to find he hasn't much left to listen with. The man pitches lifelessly to the sand. Miller grabs the radio, but it's bullet-riddled. He belly-crawls back to Sarge. Plunging suddenly into frame as bullets rip the seawall is:

REIBEN
I want a word with Eisenhower!

SARGE
You seen anybody else?

REIBEN (CONT'D)
Jackson, but that's it!

He points back the way he came. JACKSON is at the seawall. MELLISH, sharing cover with CAPARZO, hollers over:

MELLISH
Here, sir! Mellish.

CAPARZO
Caparzo. We got DeForest back there with Wade! D's hurt so bad, Wade says he ain't gonna make it!

MILLER'S POV

We glimpse WADE, the company medic, through a chaos of smoke and scrambling men. (Wade's older than most, mid-to-late 20's. We'll come to know him as steady and soft-spoken.) He's kneeling on the sand over a dying soldier, desperately trying to save the man. It's obviously a losing battle -- the chest wound is bad, and Wade is bloody up to his elbows. But Wade keeps working.

Another soldier passing Wade on his right is shot through the helmet, killed instantly.

Wade hauls the body over along with two more, making human sandbags out of what's left. Wade continues working. The body takes two more hits. One slug passes through and goes right into the brain of Wade's patient.

WADE
(screaming)
Goddamn it! Shit!

At that moment, several hands enter frame and pull Wade away. Wade is dragged up the hill to the shingle.

RESUME MILLER AND SARGE

MILLER
That's it? That's all that's left?

SARGE
We got scattered pretty bad, sir. There's bound to be more of us.

MILLER
Not enough. Not enough.

INCOMING MORTAR ROUNDS POUND THE LINE.

A DOZEN MEN are killed, bodies thrown lifelessly onto the sand. Six or seven bodies falling out of the sky, pinning living men deeper into the sand. Others digging them out. Everybody seems to be SCREAMING for a corpsman.

A CORPORAL belly-crawls up to Miller.

CORPORAL
(frantic)
What are your orders?

MILLER
Gather weapons! Whatever we got! Drag 'em in off the sand if you have to!

SARGE
Where's your B.A.R., Reiben?

REIBEN
Bottom of the channel, Sarge! Bitch tried to drown me!

SARGE
Find a replacement!

The word is relayed up and down the line, voices hollering:

VOICES
Weapons!...Weapons! Bring 'em up!

The rumor of a breakout spurs the troops. The fact that any action is being taken has a galvanizing effect. Guns and ammo are gathered, handed along, made ready. Men are even braving the German bullets to dash out and pull weapons in off the sand -- a machine gun here, a bazooka there, M-1s, pistols...

MILLER
Who's got bangalores?

VOICES
(up and down the line)
Bangalore!...Who's got bangers?

We're lookin'...We're lookin'... We're lookin'...BANGALORES!

MELLISH AND CAPARZO

Are eyeing a .30 caliber machine gun lying about ten yards out like a pair of hungry dogs eyeing a bone.

MELLISH
You run faster'n I do.

CAPARZO
You're a smaller target.

MELLISH
(beat)
Never mind.

DP 166

They both break cover, racing out to grab the weapon...

RESUME MILLER

As someone hands him a Thompson with spare clips. Weapons are coming in from both directions, along with men willing to use them. PVT. BOYLE shows up with a flamethrower still strapped to his back. Miller's impressed:

MILLER
You brought that all the way in?
BOYLE Not by selection, sir. The buckle is jammed, I can't get the damn thing off me!

He proves his point by yanking on the buckle. Frozen solid. ANGLE SHIFTS as a PAIR OF ENGINEERS arrive with bangalore torpedoes (long tubes filled with TNT).

SARGE
Any shit is better than the shit we're in.

The procedure begins: many hands pitch in, attaching the bangalores end-to-end and feeding them out onto the shingle toward the German barbed wire.

We are watching the true miracle of D-Day take place: when all the planning failed, when all the calculations proved wrong, when the whole damn thing fell on its ass...it was the common soldier who made it work anyway. They seized the day in dribs and drabs, desperately improvising their way to victory in small rag-tag groups like this one. Men are gearing up, knocking sand out of their weapons, working the bolts, loading ammo.

Mellish and Caparzo are oiling the kinks out of their newly-acquired machine gun.

THE BANGALORE

Inches closer to its mark, nearing the barbed wire.

MILLER

Is riveted. Wadeappears at his side with his medic's pack and M-1, preparing to go. Raiben's loading a B.A.R.

The bangalore's in place. Miller gives the signal. The engineer twists the detonator handle. BOOM! The dust clears, revealing a gap in the barricade.

SARGE (CONT'D)
THROUGH THE HOLE!

Miller heaves himself onto the seawall and races for the gap, followed by a dozen men.

The German machine guns re-direct their fire, tracking the runners. Several men are hit and go down, one body tangling in the barbed wire. The others plunge through the gap --

SWAMP FLATS/OTHER SIDE OF BARBED WIRE

-- and they're through, racing like crazy across the swamp flats toward the escarpment.

AT THE SHINGLE

SOLDIER #5
If I'm gonna die, it's gonna be on my way somewhere!

He lunges over the top and breaks for the wire. That's all it takes -- another two dozen men break cover, following his lead.

THE ESCARPMENT

Is a maze of deep winding furrows caused by erosion. Plenty of room to hide. Especially if you're German.

The GIs start up the slope, sticking to the deepest furrows, using them as natural trenches...working their way uphill...

Leap-frogging positions and keeping low...pausing briefly to assess the blind turns...

REIBEN'S POV:

Five men turn right on a blind curve inside one of the trenches.

There is a hideous explosion of small arms fire. Two of the men run back out, bumping into eleven more GI's heading the opposite direction. Reiben stops when he sees the log jam.

Suddenly, four -- eight -- twelve German grenades (potato mashers) start to bombard the log jam. Reiben leaps back, just before a dozen tremendous EXPLOSIONS.

Reiben looks up. It literally starts to rain red, covering Reiben.

JAR 166

MILLER
THIS WAY. THIS WAY.

ANGLE ON - ANOTHER GAP

...and we come to a gap in the path, following behind Miller. Between here and there is nothing but 30 or 40 feet of open space to cross on a blind angle. Problem is, you have no idea what's waiting for you until you poke your head out.

The MACHINE GUNS sound close now. We're also hearing the POOF-POOF-POOF of mortars nearby.

Miller motions everybody to wait. He grabs a bayonet and digs a tiny mirror from an inside pocket. He looks at the men, eyes falling on Mellish, who's chewing gum and watching him with puzzlement. Miller unceremoniously digs the gum out of Mellish's mouth, uses the gum to affix the mirror to the tip of the bayonet.

He eases the bayonet out, angling it around to see:

REFLECTION IN MIRROR

It's shaky but effective: about 20 yards up is a SAND-BAGGED EMPLACEMENT WITH TWO MACHINE GUN TEAMS blasting away at the

beach below. Next to their position are TWO MORTAR TEAMS popping shells at the sky, plus some ADDITIONAL INFANTRY.

The mirror angles slowly up, giving us the final bit of bad news: ten yards past the machine guns is a CONCRETE BUNKER with the MUZZLE OF AN 88 looming from the long horizontal firing port. Another shell fires. WHUMP!

GERMAN MACHINE GUN NEST

TEAM #1 is hammering away at the beach. The SOLDIER feeding the ammo belt catches a glint of Miller's mirror in his eye. He glances over, nudging the MACHINE GUNNER as:

MILLER

Pulls the mirror back in.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Two 642's, two heavy mortars, over sixty, up twenty. 88 in the bunker.

SARGE
We don't got the angle. We don't got the angle from here.
(pointing)
There's a perfect position for flanking fire, but it's a journey.

MILLER
That's the route.

Miller motions to four men huddled near him.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Davis, Young, you other two. They're aiming at the beach, you can get across before they react. Be prepared to give the rest of us covering fire, we'll need it.

The four men take an instant to get ready and then scrabble up the path into the gap. MACHINE GUN FIRE rips into them before they even make the rise --

MACHINE GUN NEST

Team #1 has re-positioned its gun and is now HAMMERING AWAY at the gap below.

MILLER AND THE OTHERS

Are horrified as the four GIs get chewed to pieces. The FIRING STOPS, leaving three men dead and one screaming on the ground. A FINAL BURST takes him out.

MILLER (CONT'D)
God damn it!

SARGE
Why don't we hand out blindfolds. It's a firing squad.

MILLER
It's the only way.

Miller turns to the next four men.

MILLER (CONT'D)
You four, this time suppressing fire!

The second four move to the head of the gap.

Miller moves for a better angle against the machine guns. Calls to Jackson, the tall, gangly, southern country-boy sharp-shooter.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Anything you can do for us?

JACKSON
Yes, sir.

Miller signals others where to direct the cover fire. Turns to the second four.

MILLER
Go!

The second four take deep breaths, race out, and disappear into the gap. The Germans pour a river of fire into the unseen gap. Miller and others blast suppressing fire. Jackson nails one of the Germans. Not enough.

No one emerges from the other side. Miller doesn't need to look this time. Miller turns, looking for the next four. His eyes fall on Sarge and Reiben. Reiben smiles.

REIBEN
Captain, can I put in for a transfer?

MILLER
Meet me at the top. We'll start the paperwork. Dickerson, Berger, you too.

The third four move into place. Sarge and Miller exchange a look. They both see the madness of what they are doing. Miller and the others open up on the Germans.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Go!

Sarge rolls his eyes, takes a breath, scrambles towards the gap. Disappears, the other three right behind.

The German fire increases. Potato masher grenades bounce down, explode below. A pair of screams. Two bodies fall down the cliff, Dickerson and Berger.

Miller dives to a much more exposed position in the rocks, fires more effective cover. German bullets ricochet around him. He is cut by rock fragments, but not hit directly.

An instant later, Sarge and Reiben come out of the gap and into view, scrambling into the relative safety of the overhang.

The German fire shoots toward the exposed Miller, who curls himself into a tiny ball, trying to make the most of his light cover behind the rocks.

Under the overhang, Sarge and Reiben untangle themselves.

REIBEN
(mantra-like)
I'm not dead, I'm not dead, I'm not dead, I'm not dead.

Miller's mind races. Bullets chatter and rip. He notices that Jackson is closest to the outcropping at the other end.

MILLER
Jackson! You ready to get across?

JACKSON
Any time's good, sir!

Miller steps into the open. Events play out in fractions of seconds:

THE GERMAN MACHINE GUNNER

Sees Miller just standing there, a perfect target, swings the machine gun toward him.

MILLER

Stands firm as BULLETS RIP THE GROUND in his direction --

MILLER
GO!

-- and Jackson's up and running. Miller throws himself back, barely making it, his bootheel getting BLOWN OFF as Sarge and the others drag him in.

SARGE
CAPTAIN, IF YOUR MOTHER SAW YOU DO THAT, SHE'D BE VERY UPSET!

MILLER
I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY MOTHER.

Jackson makes it across the gap to the outcropping. The German gunner tries to readjust, but he's too late.

The pissed-off gunner KEEPS FIRING, battering the gap with bullets, trying to nail Reiben, trying to nail anything. Reiben's screaming and yelling, everybody's going crazy...

...except Jackson. He's the calm at the center of the storm. He works his rifle bolt, raises the scope to his eye --

RIFLE SCOPE POV

-- and tries to pin the German gunner in the crosshairs. It's not easy; there's a lot of motion and smoke in the frame.

JACKSON

Tries to tune out the noise and fury around him, especially:

REIBEN
GODDAMN IT, ROY! DON'T YOU FORGET ABOUT ME! C'MON BUDDY, PULL MY ASS OUT OF THIS! I'M BEGGING YOU, ROY, OH, JESUS CHRIST...

MILLER
Jackson? Do you have a shot?

A pause, everybody holding their breath, waiting for a reply:

JACKSON
Send the next four over!

Jackson squeezes the trigger and ---- the German gunner's head snaps back as the bullet exits the back of his helmet. SPANG! His partner is stunned, shoves the body aside, grabs the weapon to take over...

The NEXT FOUR GIs break from cover, racing across. Reiben scrambles to his feet, sprinting for dear life...

Jackson squeezes off another shot, nailing the second German. The man pitches over, machine gun CHATTERING and then stopping as it pitches off the cliff. The gun falls 25 feet, nailing ONE OF THE GIS in the back of the head, knocking him unconscious. TWO OTHER MEN pull him through the gap.

A THIRD GERMAN runs up, shouting to the others --

GERMAN #3
DIE FLANKE! DIE FLANKE!

-- and Jackson drops him too. Three for three.

That's it. Without that machine gun, the German flank is wide open. The Americans surge up the gap with a wild cry, storming the German position with everything they've got.

The battle is short and fierce: MACHINE GUN TEAM #2 frantically tries shifting their gun to the gap, but bullets cut them down. Their supporting INFANTRY scramble to cover the flank. THE MORTAR TEAMS scatter for their weapons, RETURNING FIRE...

Mellish and Caparzo slam their machine gun down and OPEN FIRE, raking Germans off their feet...

Reiben advances with his B.A.R., blowing HUGE HOLES across the tops of the German sandbags, killing two of the enemy...

Miller and his men swarm the German position. Soldiers on both sides are cut down in the span of eyeblinks -- but the Germans are flatly overwhelmed.

Pvt. Boyle has the final word -- he hoses the area with his flamethrower, frying anything that still moves. A WALL OF FLAME mushrooms skyward on a column of black smoke.

MILLER
BUNKER!

The GIs keeps going, racing for the bunker. RIFLE AND MACHINE GUN FIRE ERUPTS from within, taking down a few men ---- but Miller and the rest are too fast, slamming into position at the bunker's base. Miller signals for grenades. Pins are popped. The GIs lob the grenades into the bunker through the horizontal firing port above their heads and --

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! CONCUSSIVE BLASTS leap from the port, trailed by billowing smoke. The GIs jump to their feet, SPRAYING SMALL ARMS FIRE through the bunker port just to make goddamn sure...

...and then it's over. All that's left now is the slow, dazed aftershock of terror and adrenalin. Wade hurries to the aid of a wounded man moaning on the ground.

Miller and the others look around, stunned -- we did it. We're alive. After the beach, it's more than any of them expected. Nobody says anything, because they're really aren't words to express the moment. We're here. It's a fact.

SARGE (O.S.)
Oh my God...

Miller turns, follows Sarge's gaze.

SARGE (CONT'D)
...that's quite a view.

ANGLE SHIFTS to reveal the beach below and the ocean beyond. Allied ships crowd the horizon. Closer to shore, everything in the water seems to be shattered and burning. Subsequent waves of landing craft are threading through the carnage and hitting the beach. Troops are still running for the safety of the shingle by the hundreds. Shells are bursting. Fire and smoke is everywhere. It's horrible...mind-boggling...magnificent.

MILLER
Yes it is. Quite a view.

INT - WAR DEPARTMENT - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

...and the BOOMING CLATTER of machine guns and artillery transforms into the BOOMING CLATTER of typewriter keys slamming onto a field of pale yellow paper:

"WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU OF THE DEATH OF YOUR SON
LT. DAVID J. RYAN, KILLED IN ACTION 6 JUNE 1944
DURING THE ALLIED INVASION OF EUROPE..."

A TELEGRAM

Lands atop a stack of identical telegrams in the "out" box on some unseen typist's desk...

...as CAMERA TRAVELS to another desk...then another...and another...as more and more telegrams are being laid atop other telegrams in a long series of "OUT" boxes...

...and we come to a stack being picked up by a MAN'S HANDS and transferred to a rolling cart. He pushes his cart along, pausing at yet another desk...where he picks up another stack, transfers it to the cart...

AN IMPOSSIBLY LONG ROW OF DESKS

...and we reveal the cart being pushed along by ONE OF DOZENS OF CIVILIAN CLERKS (most elderly) making rounds. The room is huge and somber, and would be quiet as a library if not for the CLATTERING of typewriters...

ANGLE ON DESK

Where the HEAD CLERK is sifting through telegrams and checking them against a master list. He comes across one which gives him pause. He raises it, peering intently, murmurs:

ELLIS
Ryan?

Something rings a bell. He grabs a master file, scans down lists of names, finds something troubling. He rises...

A LIEUTENANT'S DESK

Is seen through all the activity. The head clerk is speaking to a YOUNG LIEUTENANT, who is visibly shaken by what he's hearing. He motions to the clerk to follow, strides off...

A CAPTAIN'S OFFICE

Seen through a glass wall: the Young Lieutenant is speaking to a CAPTAIN ELLIS while the clerk stands by. Ellis is also clearly disturbed by what he's being told. He takes the papers from the Lieutenant and strides out...

INT - COL. RAMSEY'S OFFICE - DAY

A busy office. AIDES and SECRETARIES. The walls and tables are covered with maps of Normandy and complex deployment charts. COLONEL RAMSEY is pouring himself a cup of coffee and looking very tired as Captain Ellis enters:

ELLIS
Sir? There's something you should know.

COL. RAMSEY
Yes?

ELLIS
Three brothers have been killed within the past two weeks. Two at Normandy, one on Saipan.

Color drains from the Colonel's face. Others overhear.

COL. RAMSEY
We have confirmation?

ELLIS
Yes, sir. All three telegrams were approved for delivery.

COL. RAMSEY
Jesus.

ELLIS
That's not all, sir. There's a fourth brother, James. He parachuted in with the 101st Airborne the night of the invasion.

COL. RAMSEY
Is he alive?

ELLIS
We don't know.

COL. RAMSEY
(beat)
Come with me.

The Colonel strides from the room with Ellis at his heels. The aides and secretaries watch them go.

CUT TO:

HORSE'S HOOVES come thundering past camera --

EXT - FARM COUNTRY - MANSFIELD, OHIO - EARLY MORNING

-- as a beautiful 17 YEAR-OLD GIRL spurs her mount along a ridge overlooking a farm, reddish blonde hair flying in the breeze. The countryside is stunningly green, and dreamy with the last of the early morning mist.

The girl and horse gallop along, owning the moment, just the two of them. She suddenly reins in, seeing:

A car in the distance. An olive green Army staff car is traveling the country highway below.

The girl stares at the car, fear slowly blossoming, though she doesn't even know why. Maybe it's because she's never seen an Army staff car out this way.

The car turns in off the highway, kicking up dust along the private road leading to the farm. The girl's heart jumps. She spurs her horse down the ridge, racing the car toward:

THE RYAN FARM

A white farmhouse surrounded by miles of corn and alfalfa. A flag in the window displays four blue stars, each representing a family member in the armed services. A RADIO PLAYS SOFTLY, giving us Johnny Hartman singing Irving Berlin's "Remember."

We find an OLD MAN (70's) dozing on the porch swing with a DOG at his feet. It's the dog who stirs first, raising his head at the car's approach. The old man lifts his chin off his chest.

MRS. RYAN (mid to late 40's) steps from the house with a tray of iced tea. She sees the car coming, knows it can't be good news. She sets the tray down, readying herself for what may come. She looks over and sees her HUSBAND step from the barn.

The car pulls up with a PRIVATE at the wheel. An ARMY OFFICER

Emerges...accompanied by the LOCAL PASTOR.

THE GIRL

Comes galloping toward the house, stops. The men from the car are talking to her mother. The girl can't hear the words, but she clearly hears her mother's heartbroken SOBBING cut the morning air.

The girl jumps off the horse, running toward the house with her heart in her throat as we

CUT TO:

INT - GENERAL MARSHALL'S OFFICE - DAY

GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL, Army Chief of Staff, has his nose in the Ryan file. Colonel Ramsey and Captain Ellis stand by, along with SEVERAL OTHER SUBORDINATES. The office is a busy nexus bustling with SECRETARIES AND STAFF.

GEN. MARSHALL
(softly)
Goddamn it.

COL. RAMSEY
All four of them were in the same infantry company, but we split them up after the Sullivan brothers died on the Juneau.

GEN. MARSHALL
(refers to file)
What about the youngest son, James...has there been any contact?

COL. RAMSEY
No, sir. He's somewhere behind enemy lines.

Marshall closes the file, lays it down.

GEN. MARSHALL
Well, if he's alive, we're going to send someone to get him the hell out of there.

CUT TO:

EXT - NORMANDY FIELD - DAY

An ARTILLERY BARRAGE rains down. A COMPANY OF AMERICANS is pinned down by an unseen German force lurking in the treeline a few hundred yards ahead. The GIs are miserable, dug in amongst the shell craters, FIRING BACK as best they can.

Wade is caring for an INJURED SOLDIER, squeezing a bag of clear plasma. The man's BUDDIES are clustered around, pitching in as best they can -- one guy's holding a cigarette for him, a second is squeezing his hand, a third is jamming a rifle into the ground bayonet-first as a makeshift I.V. stand.

INJURED SOLDIER
Am I really gonna be all right?
WADE I told you so, didn't I?
(glances down)
Hey, the work's guaranteed. Nobody's Asked for their money back yet.

This brings a weak smile -- the man's reassured. Wade hangs the plasma bag from the rifle as Miller comes running...

MILLER
Where we dug in?

WADE
(cocks his head)
That way, sir! Just over there!

...and WE FOLLOW Miller, crouching and ducking, hurling himself into the crater occupied by his men. He finds himself wallowing in sludge, recoils from the stench:

MILLER
What the hell are we in?

REIBEN
Shit, sir!

MILLER
Shit?

JACKSON
It's farm country, Captain!

MILLER
What were they raising, elephants?

They duck as a SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS send dirt and sludge rocketing skyward -- and raining back down again.

REIBEN
Now it's raining shit. How nice.

CAPARZO
Remind you of home?

Reiben throws Caparzo a look -- drop dead. Miller hollers to SGT. DONOVAN hunched with his radio in the next crater:

MILLER
DONOVAN! WHERE'S OUR GODDAMN ARTILLERY?

DONOVAN
THIS IS OUR GODDAMN ARTILLERY!

Miller cocks his head -- did I hear you right?

MILLER
THIS IS OURS? HAVE YOU TOLD THEM THEY'RE DROPPING A LITTLE BIT SHORT? THE GERMANS ARE THAT WAY!

DONOVAN
I'M TRYING, SIR!

Reiben rears up next to Miller, shouting:

REIBEN
TELL THOSE MORONS TO WALK IT UP INTO THE TREELINE SO WE CAN GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE AND GET INTO CAEN!

MILLER
(stares at him)
When did you get so gung ho?

REIBEN
Not gung ho, sir. I just think we should be the first into Caen is all.

MILLER
Why, what's in Caen?

REIBEN
Lingerie, sir.

SARGE
Lingerie!

REIBEN
Caen's famous for it, Sarge. One might go so far as to say it's the lingerie capital of the world.

CAPARZO
How do you know so much about it?

REIBEN
Hell, I grew up in lingerie!

MELLISH
That's more than we needed to know!

REIBEN
Not wearing it, idiot! It's my family's business going back three generations! We got the best store in Manhattan, I worked there from the time I could crawl! We carry Caen lingerie, it's the finest there is! It's all I been thinking about since the invasion!

MILLER
There's a war on. Good chance they're not still making lingerie. REIBEN They'll always make lingerie, sir. It's one of the three basic needs of man -- food, shelter, something silky that laces up the side...

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! Artillery shells fall close. Fertilizer rains down. Miller rises, spitting sludge, screaming:

MILLER (CONT'D)
DONOVAN, GODDAMN IT!

DONOVAN
I THINK IT'S GETTING SORTED OUT NOW, SIR! COMMAND'S ON THE LINE, THEY WANT YOU BACK AT H.Q.!

MILLER
ME? THEY WANT ME?

DONOVAN
THEY SAY ON THE DOUBLE, SIR!

MILLER
Could be the war's over. SARGE Let us know. We'll be here holding our breath.

Miller hauls himself out of the crater, takes off running.

CUT TO:

EXT - REAR AREA/FIELD H.Q. - DAY

EXPLOSIONS RUMBLE in the distance. Vehicles and men are everywhere. A jeep veers to a stop. Miller gets out, motions for the DRIVER to wait. He heads for a scorched, bullet-riddled GERMAN BUNKER being used as a temporary H.Q.

INT - FIELD H.Q./GERMAN BUNKER - DAY

Miller enters, salutes a MAJOR:

MILLER
Sir, Captain Miller reporting as ordered.

MAJOR
Captain. Come with me.

Miller is led deeper into the bunker, where he finds a DOZEN OFFICERS with as many AIDES, RUNNERS, and RADIOMEN. Very busy. LT. COLONEL ANDERSON is in command, talking on a field phone:

ANDERSON
...I understand your problem, but if we don't get that equipment off-loaded by 0600, we're gonna have an entire division between here and Caen with its ass hanging out of its pants...

As Miller waits, we see how dazed with exhaustion he is. It's all he can do keep from falling down. His eyes fall on a cup of coffee and a half-eaten sandwich. Judging from his look, the sandwich and coffee are sexier than Betty Grable.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
...no, just have them hold right there until we get those tanks up from the rear. And keep me posted.

He hangs up, turns to Miller, nounces the shit smell:

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
That's quite an aroma.

MILLER
Nothing a shower wouldn't fix, sir.

ANDERSON
Report.

Miller crosses to a map, emotionless:

MILLER
Sector four's nearly secure. We put out those last three German 88s, found them about two miles inland.

ANDERSON
Enemy strength?

MILLER
A company of Wehrmacht, some Polish. We took twenty three prisoners, turned them over to intelligence.

ANDERSON
Our casualties?

MILLER
Forty four. Twenty one dead.
(off their silence)
They didn't want to give up those 88s, sir.

ANDERSON
It was a hard assignment.
(beat)
I have another one for you.

MILLER
Is this my company re-org?

ANDERSON
No, I'm afraid that'll have to wait. Fact is, we've got something special for you...

Anderson grabs a written order, hands it to Miller.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
...straight from the top.

CUT TO:

EXT - NORMANDY FIELD - DAY

The battle proceeds, with the Americans slowly gaining ground. Miller comes running, dives into a crater with Sarge.

MILLER
Put on your traveling shoes, Sarge, we're heading out.

SARGE
Where?

MILLER
Ste.-Marie-du-Mont. We're taking a patrol up there on a public relations mission.
(off his look)
There's this Private Ryan with the 101st. We gotta go find him and bring him back to the beach.

SARGE
Is that a joke?

MILLER
Seems all his brothers got killed, so they gave him a ticket home.

SARGE
(baffled)
Why?

MILLER
I didn't ask.

SARGE
You didn't ask?

MILLER
Save me the grief! I want Reiben on B.A.R., Wade as corpsman, Jackson for sniper, Mellish and Bixby on the thirty...

SARGE
Bixby's dead.

MILLER
Fine, Caparzo then. Get 'em all cleaned up and fed. I'll meet you on the beach in one hour, the supply depot at Easy Green.

SARGE
Where you going?

MILLER
Get us a translator.

Miller and Sarge take off in different directions as we

CUT TO:

EXT - INTELLIGENCE TENT - OMAHA BEACH - DAY

A tent in the midst of the staging area. Miller appears, showered and in fresh clothes, heading into --

THE TENT

-- where he finds THREE CORPORALS working at map tables like studious nerds the day before finals. They're gridding maps, covering them in plastic. Tedious, detailed work.

MILLER
Who's Upham?

UPHAM looks up, a thin 24 year-old with glasses.

UPHAM
Uh, me, sir. That's me. I'm Upham.

MILLER
I'm told you speak flawless French and German.

UPHAM
Well, my French has a slight accent. My German's clean. It has a touch of the Bavarian.

MILLER
Fine, grab your gear. You've been reassigned to me.

UPHAM
Reassigned, sir?

Miller flashes the written order. I own your ass.

MILLER
We're going to Ste.-Marie-du-Mont.

UPHAM
(blinks)
There are Germans there, sir.

MILLER
That's my understanding.

UPHAM
But I'm a translator. I translate.

MILLER
That's the idea.

UPHAM
But...I've never been in combat, sir. In fact, I haven't fired a rifle since basic.

MILLER
It'll come back to you.

UPHAM
(hesitates)
May I bring my typewriter? See, I'm writing a book and I...

Miller stops him with a look -- you gotta be kidding.

UPHAM (CONT'D)
How about a pencil?

MILLER
A small one.

CUT TO:

EXT - OMAHA BEACH - EASY GREEN STAGING AREA - DAY

Here comes Upham, trying to keep up with Miller. Upham's grappling with his pack, his M-1, and his helmet -- all of which seem to be trying to get away from him.

MILLER'S MEN

Are waiting, exhaustion etched in their faces (though they're a lot cleaner). They see Miller approach, trailed by Upham.

MELLISH
Who's the drip?

SARGE
Translator.

They all fall in step behind Miller, trailing him through all the activity (and hemming in an increasingly nervous Upham). Reiben moves up alongside Miller:

REIBEN
Captain, I been thinking this whole thing over, and it seems to me you need a really top-notch P.A.R. man on a mission like this.

MILLER
You are top-notch.

REIBEN
...no, I'm not, sir, not really. Morgan's much better, I think you should make <u>him</u> volunteer for this, you know, so as to maximize your chances for success, plus he's Irish, so he speaks the lingo...

MILLER
Reiben, forget about the lingerie.

REIBEN
...aw, <u>c'mon,</u> sir! You can't lemme get this close to Caen and just yank It away! It's cruel and unusual...

CAPARZO
(muttering)
You're cruel and unusual.

REIBEN
...it's like telling an Arab he can't go to Mecca, you see what I'm saying, sir?

MILLER
Come talk to me when you're an Arab. Any other questions?

REIBEN
Yes, sir. What idiot thought this one up?

MILLER
(deadpan)
Eisenhower.

REIBEN
(falling back)
Him? Again? I'm beginning not to trust this Eisenhower so much!

MELLISH
Me neither. Ever notice how German that name sounds? "Eisenhower?" Think about it...

The others are offering Reiben sympathetic looks -- nice try. Miller approaches a stressed-out BATTALION MOTOR SERGEANT overseeing an endless parade of VEHICLES being offloaded from LCTs -- DUKWs, tanks, troop carriers, you name it.

SERGEANT
GET THOSE GODDAMN HALF-TRACKS OUT OF THERE!

PRIVATE (O.S.)
They're blocked in!

SERGEANT
UNBLOCK 'EM, YOU IDIOT!
(notices Miller)
Captain? What can I do for you?

MILLER
I have a requisition for a truck.

SERGEANT
Sorry, sir, fresh outta trucks, how 'bout a '38 Ford roadster, V-8, red with black interior?

MILLER
White walls?

SERGEANT
No white-walls, sir, there's a war on.
(hollers offscreen)
NOT THERE, MULLET HEAD! WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

MILLER
A half-track? Anything?

SERGEANT
Wish I could help, sir, but Division's got me pumping everything on wheels straight to the front. Try back tomorrow?

MILLER
What about those?

Miller indicates a pair of jeeps parked nearby. The lead jeep displays general's insignia on the front bumper -- a red "license plate" with three gold stars.

SERGEANT
Oh, no. See the red tag with the pretty stars? Those jeeps belong to General Craig. You even breathe on 'em, they'll court martial me.

JACKSON
C'mon, partner, we gotta get to Saint Mary Doomont...

UPHAM
(correcting him)
Ste.-Marie-du-Mont...

JACKSON
...whatever, you gonna make us walk?

SERGEANT
What's in Ste.-Marie besides Germans?

MILLER
We gotta find some kid named Ryan and send him home.

SERGEANT
Senator's son?

MILLER
His brothers were killed in action. Command wants him out of here.

The sergeant pauses, affected by this.

SERGEANT
All his brothers?
(Miller nods)
Damn. I got brothers.

The gears are turning in his head, weighing the good deed versus the consequences. He peers at the jeeps.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
I'd say lose the stars. Too nice a target.

MILLER FOLLOWS HIS GAZE TO:

THE GENERAL'S THREE STAR INSIGNIA PLATE

Beat. A bootheel SLAMS into frame and kicks the plate clean off. ANGLE WIDENS as Miller piles into the jeep with Sarge at the wheel, Reiben and Jackson in back. Both jeeps ROAR OFF. The motor sergeant watches them go...

...as behind him, GENERAL CRAIG AND HIS STAFF exit a tent to find the jeeps gone and the insignia tag on the ground.

GENERAL CRAIG
SERGEANT! WHERE THE HELL ARE MY GODDAMN JEEPS?

EXT - OMAHA BEACHTABLEAU - DAY

The two jeeps go winding off through the staging area as WE BOOM UP to reveal the biggest invasion in history:

The scope of it is stunning. The beach is covered with mountains of supplies, arriving troops, streams of vehicles, hundreds of barrage balloons overhead. Offshore, a massive Mulberry port is being built. Beyond that, thousands of ships and boats. Landward, the smoke of hundreds of fires hangs on the horizon. EXPLOSIONS RUMBLE, some distant, some closer.

Miller and his tiny group weave their way through the middle of it, eventually lost from view as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - FRENCH COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Here come the two jeeps, passing (sometimes weaving, honking, and bulling their way through) a column of American VEHICLES

And INFANTRYMEN headed in the same direction. German vehicles lie shattered and burning on both sides of the road.

JEEP #1

Sarge is at the wheel, trying to make headway. Miller's next to him, focused on the map. Jackson calls forward:

JACKSON
Cap'n? I ask a question? Where you figure on putting Private Ryan, sir? (off Miller's silence)

It's just that both vehicles seem to be full. I was wondering if you're expecting to have more room on the way back?

REIBEN
Worse comes to worse, we could shoot the translator.

MILLER
There will be no shooting the translator. He speaks French and his German has a touch of the Bavarian.

Reiben and Jackson trade a look -- too bad.

JEEP #2

Upham's squeezed to one corner of the back seat because Caparzo's taking up most of the room. Wade's driving, with Mellish riding shotgun. Upham tries to break the ice:

UPHAM
I'm Upham. Corporal Upham.
(beat)
You don't have to salute or anything. I know all that breaks down in combat.

Caparzo swivels his head, peering at Upham as if he were an insect. Mellish turns around, nails him with a ferrety gaze.

MELLISH
There's only one reason you're along for this ride, Upham.

UPHAM
To translate?

MELLISH
As food, in case we get lost.

RESUME JEEP #1

Reiben's got his nose buried in a pocket Michelin guide of France.

REIBEN
Captain, gotta tell ya, the irony of this mission is killing me.

MILLER
How so?

REIBEN
It's like Beethoven. Greatest composer ever lived, right? Guy goes deaf. I mean, who'd he piss off? Here I am -- the Beethoven of ladies' foundation garments -- one step away from Caen, the center of the known lingerie universe. Instead, I'm going to Ste.-Marie-du-Mont to save some private who's probably already dead.

MILLER
There's gotta be a bright side, look for it.

REIBEN
Sir, you know what Ste.-Marie-du-Mont is famous for? Cheese. Says so right here. While everybody else is heading for Caen, we're off to the goddamn cheese capital of France. What could possibly be the bright side?

MILLER
Well, I, for one, like cheese.

They come to a fork in the road where traffic is snarled. An M.P. is directing vehicles, dealing with the bottleneck.

MILLER (CONT'D)
How's the road to Ste.-Marie?

M.P.
Bad, sir. Germans are knocking hell out of our traffic. I'd avoid it if possible.

Miller looks to Sarge -- they have no choice.

SARGE
Let us through there, Lieutenant?

The M.P. holds up traffic, waving them through as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - ROAD TO STE.-MARIE-DU-MONT - DAY

The jeeps come up the road. The route is becoming increasingly eerie and deserted, like a graveyard. They keep passing destroyed vehicles and strewn bodies. Shell craters mark the road and surrounding fields.

Miller raises his hand, motioning for a stop. Both jeeps pull over. He scans ahead with his binoculars.

SARGE
You think they got this road zeroed, sir?

They hear the DISTINCT THUMP OF AN 88mm CANNON.

MILLER
Yes!

Sarge jams it in gear, both jeeps peeling out as: The SHELL SCREAMS IN. WHAM! A HUGE EXPLOSION blows a hole in the road behind them, geysering dirt skyward...

...and they keep going, racing up the road, veering like crazy as SHELL AFTER SHELL COMES SCREAMING DOWN, hammering the roadbed with one MASSIVE EXPLOSION after another...

...so they veer off the road, both jeeps bouncing/accelerating across the bare dirt fields, both drivers going balls-to-the-wall as they swerve wildly through a GAUNTLET OF EXPLOSIONS...

Wade's jeep takes a spray of shrapnel. Everybody ducks as the windshield shatters and the radiator grill perforates...

...and the shelling stops. Everything falls quiet as clouds of dust drift off across the fields.

The jeeps slow down. Wade's vehicle is trailing steam -- he's desperately nursing a sputtering, dying engine.

CAPARZO
How come they stopped? We out of range?

The ROAR OF AN AIRPLANE brings their heads around. An ME-109 rips into view from behind the treeline flying maybe 20 feet off the deck --

SARGE
Shit!

-- and OPENS FIRE with its wing-mounted machine guns. Twin rows of exploding dirt race across the field toward us as:

WADES'S JEEP

Caparzo grabs Upham. Everybody bails out except Wade, who stays at the wheel cranking the engine...

MELLISH
WADE!

SARGE'S JEEP

Sarge peels out, swerving wildly as the INCOMING MACHINE GUN FIRE misses them by inches...

...but the bullets rip Wade's jeep right up the center, blowing the hood clean off as Wade dives clear.

THE ME-109

Churns through a tight, fast turn, coming around as:

WADE'S JEEP

Caparzo runs in, grabs the .30 caliber to salvage it. Mellish grabs Wade, hauls him away, everybody scattering to get clear as the ME-109 OPENS FIRE AGAIN --

CAPARZO
COVER!

-- and the jeep gets strafed a second time. This time the AMMO SATCHELS EXPLODE. The plane ROARS past, going after:

SARGE'S JEEP

Which is taking wild evasive turns, everybody hanging on for dear life. The Messerschmitt OPENS FIRE AGAIN, its machine guns ripping massive furrows in the ground ---- and chasing the jeep right into a ditch. They go in hard, the jeep sliding/tilting up onto its side as the men tumble clear. The plane ROARS past, flying so low it sends hay swirling off the haystacks with its propwash ---- and then it's gone, vanished behind the trees. Miller rises, the first to get his head on straight:

MILLER
Let's get the jeep out before the son of a bitch comes back!

Miller's group struggles to push the jeep over onto its wheels. Wade's group comes running and pitches in...

...and we hear the WHUMP of that goddamn 88 again. The men gaze up with "oh shit" written all over their faces...

The SHELL COMES SCREAMING IN. WHAM! A HUGE EXPLOSION of dirt leaps up some thirty yards to their left...

MILLER (CONT'D)
PUSH!

...and they tilt the jeep over on its tires. It's still stuck in a ditch, but at least it's upright. Sarge jumps behind the wheel, cranks the engine, jams it in reverse, floors it -- and the tires spin wildly in the soft dirt. Miller throws himself against the hood, pushing for all he's worth:

MILLER (CONT'D)
C'MON! YOU WANNA WALK?

Everybody converges on the lurching jeep, throwing their backs into it, pushing and heaving...

The 88 goes WHUMP again. The SECOND SHELL COMES SCREAMING IN, this time exploding thirty yards to their right...

SARGE
Captain! They got us zeroed!

Sarge mashes the accelerator. Everybody's putting their shoulders into it, straining to the limit --

UPHAM
Zeroed? That's bracketing right?

-- they ignore him, rocking the jeep, tires spinning --

UPHAM (CONT'D)
I know about bracketing! I read it in a book! Isn't the next one supposed to land right on top of us?

MELLISH
Shaddap and push, you idiot!

Sarge grinds gears, slams the gas. The jeep rocks forward and back again, almost gets out of the ditch, everybody pushing and hollering, Upham looking like he might wet himself...

WHUMP! There's the 88.

MILLER
GO!

Everybody scatters away from the jeep, hauling ass and gaining precious yards, hitting the dirt as:

WHAM! Direct hit. A STUNNING BLAST. The jeep cartwheels thirty feet in the air and SLAMS BACK DOWN AGAIN in a flaming heap.

THE MEN

Raise their heads. Dirt and rocks pelt down.

CAPARZO
Well...at least the jeep's out of the ditch.

Suddenly we hear: POOF-POOF-POOF-POOF.

MILLER
Here come the mortars!

Miller hauls Upham to his feet. Everybody takes off running. Caparzo's toting the .30 cal. DOZENS OF MORTAR SHELLS come screaming down at their heels as the Germans "walk it up" across the field. The GIs desperately outrun the ADVANCING BARRAGE, everybody doing their best Jesse Owens toward --

THE TREELINE

-- where they go crashing through branches, finally collapsing to safety about thirty yards in. The mortars have stopped. The men are completely used up, struggling to catch their breath.

JPR 166

SARGE
Sound off if anybody's hit.
(looks around)
Anybody?

CAPARZO
(touching his nose)
I got a little nosebleed here...

...but that's it. They look around, amazement slowly dawning, fear and adrenalin draining away. Nobody's hit. Softly:

WADE
It's a miracle.

Nobody laughs. Only Wade can say something like that and get away with it -- besides, they know he's right.

WADE (CONT'D)
We've got an angel on our shoulder. Maybe this Ryan's good luck for us.

REIBEN
Let's not get carried away. He did get our jeeps blown up.

CAPARZO
Along with most of ammo.
(off Miller's look)
Sorry, sir. It was either grab the ammo or grab the machine gun.

MILLER
Sarge, break out the map. Caparzo, crank up the radio. I heard two 88s beyond that treeline, plus at least a dozen mortars.

UPHAM
You could tell all that from the sound?

MILLER
That's not all. There were nine gunners on the 88s, one had a broken heel on his boot, two had bratwurst for breakfast, one was named Fritz, the other Hans, maybe, I don't know, it's hard to tell.

Upham stares, almost believing it. He looks to the others for their reaction. Mellish is staring at him.

MELLISH
Hey, book boy. Look up "gullible."

Sarge vectors the map. Caparzo hands Miller the radio:

CAPARZO
Got the flyboys on the net, sir.

MILLER
(into radio)
Hornet four three, Baker One Able. I've got a target for you. Pair of Kraut 88s at sector three. From reference fox...down two, right one. Best approach is low from the east. They got an ME-109 buzzing around, so watch your tails, over.

A VOICE confirms through static. Miller hands the radio back.

SARGE
That lunatic in the 109 could give our planes a serious headache. Maybe we should try taking out those 88s ourselves.

MILLER
What, and risk winning the war? You know better than that, Sergeant. We've got our orders.

Beat. Sarge nods, looks to the others:

SARGE
You heard the man. Let's move out.

The men gather themselves as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - COUNTRYSIDE - FIELD - DAY

Hot and desultory, trees barely stirring. Miller's walking point. The others are some distance behind, spread out to avoid bunching. Everybody's wary, scanning the fields and woods. They've been walking for hours. Upham looks miserable, weighed down like a pack horse, slapping at horseflies.

Miller stops. Everybody freezes. Miller checks ahead with binoculars, turns and gives Sarge a few hand signals. Sarge nods, turns to the others:

SARGE
(voice low)
Two minute rest, other side of that wall. Be a good time to fill your canteens. Corporal, you do mine.

Sarge tosses his canteen to Upham, then goes off to join Miller. The men leave the field, clambering over a low stone wall and dropping exhausted to the other side. They shrug off their packs and gear in the shade of a tree.

There's a cool stream running by. Everybody makes a beeline for it (except Wade, who hands his canteen to Mellish and stays watchfully behind). The men kneel, splashing their faces and dousing their heads, then start filling canteens.

UPHAM

Finds himself between Caparzo and Reiben. Upham tries Caparzo first, still trying to break the ice:

UPHAM
So? Where you from?

CAPARZO
Get stuffed.

So much for Caparzo. Upham turns to Reiben.

UPHAM
You?

REIBEN
Drop dead.

Okay, fine. Upham falls silent. Mellish is staring at him.

MELLISH
You writing a book, book boy?

UPHAM
As a matter of fact, yes.

Mellish and Upham rise, head back toward Wade.

MELLISH
Name's Mellish. Stanley Mellish, of the Chicago Mellishes. I'm small but wiry, with piercing, steel-gray eyes and chiseled, handsome features... don't you take notes?

WADE
What's your book about, Corporal?

UPHAM
It's still in the thinking stage.

The others return, collapsing in the shade:

REIBEN
I got your book. It's about some guys who get pulled out of the war and sent off on a wild goose chase after some Irish prick they never even met.

WADE
How do you know he's a prick?

REIBEN
How do you know he's not?

JACKSON
I hate to admit it, but Reiben could be right for once.

CAPARZO
Yeah, what if this Ryan's a bigger shitface than that guy in Charlie company, what's-his-name...

MELLISH
...guy with the wart on his lip...

CAPARZO
...yeah, that guy, what if Ryan's a bigger prick than him?

MELLISH
I got a better ending. We never do find Ryan. Years go by. We're still out here looking for him, wandering like the Hebrews in the desert. Meanwhile he's back home, drinking cold beer and laying pipe with Betty Lou. Laughing at us.

CAPARZO
That's good. We need a title. How about "Captain Miller's Traveling Circus?" We get to be the clowns.

JACKSON
That's us. All we need are red noses and floppy shoes. Army issue.

Sarge appears on the other side of the wall.

SARGE
Gear up. Captain says we're wasting daylight.

Everybody rises, groaning, gearing up. Upham gazes off at Miller, hands Sarge his canteen over the wall.

UPHAM
Where's he from?

SARGE
Captain? You figure that out, you got a nice little prize. Three hundred bucks, last I heard.

WADE
2nd Battalion's got a pool going. Whoever guesses where the Captain's from and what he did as a civilian gets it all.

UPHAM
Somebody must know.

SARGE
Not even me, and we're like brothers. We went through North Africa and Sicily together.

Reiben lifts his B.A.R., heaves it across his shoulder.

REIBEN
No one's gonna win that money for the simple reason the Captain never was a civilian. They assembled him at O.C.S. out of spare parts from dead GIs. This I know for a fact.

SARGE
You got something against my beloved Captain?

REIBEN
Aside from he's an officer? Not a thing, Sarge...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - HILLY COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Jackson is walking point. The men trudge along, suffering the heat and flies. Reiben shifts his B.A.R. from one arm to the other, sweat dripping down his face.

REIBEN
You know what? I hope we do find Ryan. And I hope he's still alive.

MELLISH
Yeah? Why's that?

REIBEN
'Cause I'm gonna make the son of a bitch carry my B.A.R. all the way back to the beach for me.

CAPARZO
Let's toss in my thirty, make him carry both. See if the prick lives.

WADE
Now, now, don't be mean.

REIBEN
Easy for you, Mr. "All-I-Ever-Carry-Is-Bandages." Any idea what a B.A.R. weighs? Nineteen and a half pounds, not counting ammo. You try schlepping nineteen and a half pounds on your shoulder all goddamn day, see how you like it.

WADE
Reiben? Anyone ever tell you you're unpleasant to be around sometimes?

REIBEN
Unpleasant? This ain't unpleasant. Wait'll I get my hands on Ryan, then you'll see unpleasant...

MILLER
Why can't you children be more like Upham? Look, he's carrying all the ammo, plus the radio -- you don't see him complaining, do you?

Upham shoots a "who are you kidding" look at Miller -- and decides he's too hot an tired to care anymore:

UPHAM
Actually, sir, I was just thinking that I am so tired of this goddamn walking, I'd pay a thousand dollars to see Ryan crawl through a river of camel shit just to hear my great-aunt Martha fart "Yankee Doodle" through a field phone.

The men are shocked and impressed into momentary silence.

CAPARZO
Jesus Christ, he's a natural.

MELLISH
Good. That was good.

Up ahead, Jackson suddenly motions "down." Everybody crouches. Jackson proceeds cautiously forward and drops to his stomach at an overlook, checking out whatever's below.

He waves them forward. They scurry up to join him, dropping to his side...and WE BOOM OVER THEM to reveal the scene below:

It's a glider graveyard. The field down there is littered with wreckage. The group rises, heads down the slope, enters:

THE GLIDER GRAVEYARD

Eerie and desolate. A restless breeze stirs the grass, flapping bits of fabric. The carcasses of a dozen wooden Horsa gliders lie shattered and cocked at strange angles. Debris is strewn everywhere. A wing here. A door there.

Protruding from the ground all over the field is the cause of this carnage: telephone poles driven vertically into the ground with the sole intention of tearing gliders to pieces upon landing. It's called "Rommel's asparagus."

They pass a glider with the BODY OF THE PILOT still pinned in the cockpit. Flies are BUZZING in the heat.

They come into view of the SURVIVORS -- not many, perhaps a DOZEN WOUNDED. They're lying in and around a wrecked glider, awaiting rescue.

LIEUTENANT SOTET hobbles out to greet Miller, leaning on a makeshift crutch, one leg heavily splinted. He's drawn and haggard -- a glider pilot. Softly:

MILLER
What the hell happened?

SOTET
Germans drove telephone poles into these fields...y'know, tear us to pieces in case we tried to come in by glider.

It obviously worked. Miller's men hardly know what to say.

SOTET (CONT'D)
We had a couple of guys who could still walk. They took off days ago, try and get some help. Don't know if they ever got though. We're still waiting.

MILLER
(to Caparzo)
Get on the radio, see if you can call this position in.
(turns back)
You Airborne?

SOTET
Me? No, I'm a pilot, four-fortieth troop carriers...
(indicates wounded)
...these guys we were bringing in, they're Airborne. And those over there...

They see it for the first time: bodies are laid out on the grass in several huge lines. There must be over a hundred dead. They've been covered up as much as possible given the circumstances -- tarps, raincoats, torn glider fabric.

SOTET (CONT'D)
Did what we could for 'em. A few are still trapped in the gliders, but they'll have to wait for graves registration to catch up with us.
(softly)
Telephone poles, you believe that?

SARGE
These guys 101st? Bound for where?

SOTET
Ste.-Marie-du-Mont.

Miller and Sarge are trading looks -- is it possible?

MILLER
Wade, check the wounded, see if he's there. Lieutenant, did you collect the dogtags?

SOTET
In my glider...that one over there. Small equipment bag near the door. What's this about?

MILLER
We're looking for a trooper named Ryan. You mind?

Sotet nods, go ahead. Miller strides off with Sarge and the others at his heels, calling to Caparzo:

MILLER (CONT'D)
Caparzo! Any luck on that radio?

CAPARZO
Yes, sir! Message received and acknowledged!

INSIDE A WRECKED GLIDER

Still somewhat intact. The group enters, led by Miller. He finds the equipment bag, opens it, passes it around...

MILLER
Everybody grab a handful, we're checking tags. Ryan could be here. C'mon, empty the bag...

Everybody takes big double-handfuls, dumping the tags into their helmets and laps. They start checking, tossing tags back into the bag as they go...

REIBEN
Think he's here?

CAPARZO
Bet he is. Bet the son of a bitch is.

...and something strange takes over, something like a touch of gambling fever. The men start going faster and faster as if it were a game or competition, first one to find him wins:

CAPARZO (CONT'D)
...bet I find him first...

REIBEN
...screw you, he's mine...

MELLISH
...c'mon, I know you're in here...

JACKSON
...no use hiding, Ryan, we're on to you, buddy...

CAPARZO
...come out, come out, wherever you are...

REIBEN
...olly olly oxen free, you Irish prick...

This gets a big laugh, the search growing even giddier as:

CAPARZO
...ten bucks I nail him first...

REIBEN
...you're on, you mook...

MELLISH
(holds up tag)
I got him! Ryan! I got him!

MILLER
James Francis?

MELLISH
(reading closely)
John Gordon...<u>shit.</u>

He tosses it in the bag, disgusted. The search continues, but Miller notices the look on Upham's face -- an uncertain look that says "what are we doing?" Sarge sees it, too -- he looks from Upham to Miller, suddenly wondering as well. The other guys are catching their expressions, falling silent...

Wade appears at the doorway, his expression simmering just below furious, his voice <u>very</u> low and steady:

WADE
You wanna keep it down? Those guys out there can hear you laughing.
(indicates the dogtags)
This isn't bingo night, for Chrissakes. Those men are dead.

The men stare at the tags. Wade's got a way of cutting through the shit. They continue checking the names, silent now...

EXT - FIELD LEADING FROM GLIDER GRAVEYARD - DAY

Miller and the men are walking out across the fields, leaving the glider graveyard behind. We hear softly:

CAPARZO
I bet we find him in Ste.-Marie. I bet he made it in alive...

REIBEN
Yeah? How much we betting...

CUT TO:

EXT - STE.-MARIE-DU-MONT - DAY

A small town, mostly reduced to rubble. We're hearing sporadic SMALL ARMS FIRE, grenade and mortar EXPLOSIONS, some MEDIUM ARTILLERY in the hills. AMERICAN PARATROOPERS with the 101st crouch in doorways and hunker down in the rubble, exchanging GUNFIRE with an unseen German force. It's a sniper's alley.

Some FRENCH CIVILIANS dash across the street -- a MAN, a couple of WOMEN, several CHILDREN. They make it across, disappearing into the remains of a building.

ANGLE ON MILLER

As he enters frame f.g., flattening against a wall near a corner, his men closing ranks behind him. Miller pokes his head out, takes a quick mental snapshot (U.S. troops, gunfire, ruined buildings beyond) pulls back. SMACK! -- a bullet takes a chunk out of the brick near his head. Miller yells out:

MILLER
Thunder!

A PAUSE, THEN:

VOICE (O.S.)
Flash! Come on across!

MILLER
(turns)
By twos. Upham, you're with me.

UPHAM
With you? You mean go across?

Miller nods, eases forward to assess the path. Upham turns white as a sheet, looks to the others.

CAPARZO
It's okay, just stay close to the Captain, they can't kill him.

REIBEN
He's right, it's some kind of scientific, magnetic thing. We've all seen it. He's got nine lives, he's bullet-proof, some damn thing.

SARGE
Nobody's bullet-proof. Nobody.

Miller waves Upham to his side, getting ready...

MILLER
Coming across!

...and off they go, racing across open ground as bullets kick dust off the cobblestones.

PARATROOPER'S POSITION

Miller and Upham make it across to find TEN AIRBORNE TROOPERS Exhausted and beleaguered in the rubble. Four of the men are wounded. PRIVATES GOLDMAN AND HASTINGS are ecstatic to see Miller and Upham. (Sarge and Wade arrive next; Wade quickly starts treating the wounded. The rest of Miller's men arrive by twos as the scene plays.)

GOLDMAN
Man, you guys are a sight for sore eyes! Sergeant Hill! Our relief showed up!

SGT. HILL
(scurries over)
How many are you?

MILLER
Just eight of us. We're not relief, sorry.

SGT. HILL
Then what the hell are you doing here?
(beat, realizing)
Hey! You the guys looking for Ryan?

Miller and his men react, surprised to hear Ryan's name.

HASTINGS
We heard you were coming. It was all over the radio before the Germans started jamming us.

SGT. HILL
You're the first infantry we've seen. You ain't got a company behind you, so you must be them.

MILLER
(nods)
Is Ryan here?

SGT. HILL
Damn right he is -- other side of town, though, that's the bad news. Germans punched a hole in our center a few hours ago, cut us in two.

MILLER
You gonna try and hook back up?

Hill considers, looks to his men.

HASTINGS
I sure as hell wouldn't mind, now that we got these guys along.

GOLDMAN
Me too. I'm sick of being pinned down here.

Muttered agreement all around. Wade adds his two cents:

WADE
Your wounded need more attention than I can give them.

That clinches it. Hill turns to Miller:

SGT. HILL
Looks like you got yourself an escort. Boyd, try the walkie again, let Captain Hamill know we're coming.

BOYD tries the walkie, gets static, shakes his head.

BOYD
They're still jamming us.

SGT. HILL
Let's hope none of our boys are trigger happy on that end.

MILLER
Four men on point? Two of mine, two of yours?

SGT. HILL
(nods)
Hastings, Goldman, up front.

MILLER
Reiben, Caparzo. Fundamentals, short runs, double up at the corners, one man close, one man wide. Be careful. The rest help the wounded.

The four men move up to take the lead. The others get ready, helping the wounded to their feet.

They take off, scurrying/crouching/darting through the rubble, those at the rear helping the wounded along, making their way up the street. They leap-frog positions, hug doorways for cover, scan windows and rooftops for snipers...

It's incredibly tense, boots scuffing over cobblestones, figures darting this way and that, looks traded and acknowledged, signals given -- I think we're clear till there, let's go, keep moving, you next...

They come to a house where an entire wall has collapsed and fallen away. Three entire stories of rooms are visible and intact, the furniture still in place.

They hear something CREAK above. Everybody drops into a crouch, weapons snapping up, ready to open fire.

SGT. HILL
Thunder!

BEAT. NOTHING.

MILLER
Thunder, goddamn it, or we open Fire!

MAN (O.S.)
Ne tirez pas! On est français.

UPHAM
They're civilians!

SARGE
Yeah? Let's see 'em!

UPHAM
Montrez-vous!

A MAN appears above, peering down from a second story living room. He's French, all right -- so is his WIFE and MOTHER-IN-LAW. All appear with hands raised, talking at once:

FRENCH FAMILY
Ne tirez pas!--On est pas des soldats et on est pas arnés--Baissez Vos fusils, nous sommes vos amis!

MILLER
Stop jabbering! One at a time!

(to Upham)
Ask them where the Germans are.

UPHAM
Où sont les allemands?

MAN
Ça va pas! Ils sont partout, vous devez emmener les enfants!

MILLER
What? What's he saying?

UPHAM
I don't know, something about taking the children?

The French pull THREE SMALL CHILDREN into view. The father takes the first one by the wrist, a little girl, and dangles her over the side. She starts CRYING as he tries to hand her down, everybody talking at once:

MAN
Je vous la passe!

UPHAM
They want us to take them--

MILLER
--wait, no, tell them we can't take children--

UPHAM
--nous ne pouvons pas les prendre avec nous!

-- but the man drops the girl down. A TROOPER catches her. The French grab the other two kids, who are also starting to cry:

LITTLE BOY
Je veux pas y aller! WIFE Tu dois! Vous serez en securite avec les americains!

UPHAM
They think they'll be safe with us.

MILLER
It's not safe anywhere, goddamn it, tell 'em it's not safe...

UPHAM
Ils ne seront pas en securite avec nous, vous ne comprenez pas, on ne peut pas les emmener!

MILLER
Goddamn it, hand that kid back up! Caparzo, grab her!

Caparzo picks up the sobbing little girl, lifts her. He's short of the task, so he climbs up on a fall of rubble to gain some height. The French are crying, calling down, begging the soldiers to take the kids.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Tell 'em again! Make 'em understand!

UPHAM
Vous devez comprend que les enfants Seront plus en securite ici!

Caparzo hoists the little girl up. The father is weeping as he reaches down, gets a firm grip on her wrist ---- and at that moment a high-powered SNIPER'S BULLET WHINES IN and blows through Caparzo in a spray of blood. He flies off his feet and slams onto the cobblestones, leaving the little girl dangling in the father's grasp. He yanks her up fast as everybody dives for cover. The SOUND OF THE GUNSHOT comes moments later.

CAPARZO
I'M HIT! I'M HIT!

Wade tries to break cover to help Caparzo, but Sarge drags him back. Everybody's screaming at once:

MELLISH
CAPARZO!

CAPARZO
OH GOD, I'M SHOT!

SARGE
STAY DOWN!

SGT. HILL
GODDAMN IT! WHERE'D IT COME FROM?

Miller looks to Jackson, who's got his head cocked, listening.

JACKSON
Wasn't close by. Bullet put him on the ground before we heard the shot.

Everybody's trying to see where the gunfire came from. Silence now, except for Caparzo SCREAMING on the pavement and the French family CRYING in the apartment above.

WADE
We gotta get him out of there!

MILLER
You stay put, Wade, goddamn it!

Reiben's peering out from behind rubble as ANOTHER BULLET WHINES IN and blows a chunk of debris into his face. He jerks back, blood suddenly trickling down the side of his face...

REIBEN
SON OF A BITCH!

...and a second or two passes before we hear the actual GUNSHOT ECHOING. Miller looks to Jackson.

JACKSON
Two thousand yards, maybe more.

UPHAM
Over a mile?

Everybody scans for likely sources. Miller points at a chateau with a chapel belltower on a hillside more than a mile away. Jackson nods; he's already seen it.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
That's where I'd be.

CAPARZO
...help me...somebody...

MELLISH
You hang on, Caparzo! Hang on, buddy!

Jackson stows his standard-issue sniper rifle, pulls a zippered case off his back. He opens the case and removes an unusual long-barreled rifle, flicks down a two-legged stand, attaches a scope, working intensely as:

UPHAM
What is that?

JACKSON
Thirty-ought-six Norton long barrel. Army's only got two hundred of these.

He works the bolt, loads a single oversized shell.

UPHAM
They gave you one? You must be a hell of a shot.

JACKSON
Not where I come from.

Jackson sights down on a tree about a thousand yards out, FIRES. Evaluates. Notices Upham staring.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Checking for drift.

Jackson re-loads, puts his eye to the scope, shifts his aim toward the chateau. Waits. Finger on the trigger. Absolutely motionless. Caparzo's never far from his mind -- he's lying out there on the cobblestones, moaning for help.

IN THE CHATEAU BELLTOWER

The GERMAN SNIPER is on his stomach in the shadows, scanning through the scope of his equally impressive German rifle...

GERMAN SNIPER POV (THROUGH SCOPE)

...as he tries to pin another victim in the crosshairs. He pans the rubble, past Caparzo thrashing weakly on the ground, and finds...what the hell is that? Something poking over the rubble? Is that a head barely visible behind it? Wait, it's...Jackson aiming his sniper rifle.

THE GERMAN SNIPER

Realizes he's aiming at another sniper aiming right back at him. Their scopes are locked, both men pinning each other in the crosshairs. There's a soft intake of startled breath. The German's eyes widen and his finger goes frantically to the trigger ---- and Jackson's bullet blows straight up through the German's rifle scope, blowing the back of his head off in a blast of shattering glass and blood. The German dies instantly, rifle slipping from his fingers and plummeting to the courtyard below. Jackson's GUNSHOT ECHOES the countryside seconds later.

RESUME TOWN

Jackson lowers his rifle, nods. Done. The others rush out to Caparzo...and find him dead. Eyes glazed and staring.

MELLISH
Oh, goddamn it. Goddamn it.

All the men stare down, stunned and grim. This mission just claimed its first casualty, and everybody's pretty shaken by it. Except Miller. He hardly seems to have noticed.

MILLER
That's why we can't take any goddamn kids. Mellish, you're hauling that thirty, move!

The men are jarred by his brusque manner. Off their looks:

MILLER (CONT'D)
What do you want? Viking funeral? Sing a few hymns? Maybe wait around for another goddamn sniper?

Mellish hauls the .30 cal off the ground, barely able to tear his eyes off Caparzo's corpse. Dazed with shock and horror. Everybody moves out, feeling much the same. Reiben's wiping blood off his face, mutters darkly to Wade:

REIBEN
So much for that angel on our shoulders.

MELLISH
It's still there, it's just shitting down our necks.

EXT - STREET/TOWN HALL BUILDING - DAY

Here they come, more cautious and tense than ever. Fingers on triggers. Hearing SMALL ARMS FIRE here and there.

They come to a house and flatten into doorways. Hill looks across the street at the town hall building and scans the upper levels. Somebody dart past a window up there. Miller nudges him, points -- there's a machine gun muzzle aimed at them through an upstairs shutter. A voice calls down:

VOICE (O.S.)
Thunder!

SGT. HILL
Flash!

The machine gun muzzle eases off. Hill cocks his head at Miller -- let's go. They break cover and hustle across the street toward the town hall, heading for several huge crumbled holes in the wall...

INT - TOWN HALL BUILDING - DAY

A central lobby level with banistered landings above and all around. The place is gloomy and claustrophobic, clogged with

Wreckage and fallen beams...

Miller's group enters a back room through the holes in the wall, relieved to be inside at last. They proceed past sections of caved-in ceiling toward the lobby, trying to adjust to the gloom, sensing the presence of men ahead...

There are MEN up there, barely discernable in the shadows. Huddled and whispering. The GIs come around some fallen beams behind them, BOOTS CRUNCHING on fallen plaster ---- and the group spins around. They're Germans. INSTANT SCREAMING PANDEMONIUM ENSUES as both sides snap their weapons up, fingers taut on triggers, everybody hollering at the top of their lungs for everybody else to surrender:

EVERYBODY AT ONCE
(frenzied mixture of German and English)
PUT YOUR GODDAMN GUNS DOWN--WE'LL OPEN FIRE--GONNA SHOOT YOU DUMB SONS OF BITCHES--PUT 'EM DOWN NOW--SAID PUT THE GODDAMN GUNS DOWN--!

A GERMAN SOLDIER suddenly just OPENS FIRE, but no sooner does his Schmeisser go off than --

-- an ENORMOUS VOLLEY OF MUZZLE FLASHES ERUPTS from the banisters above the Americans' heads. It's a stunning barrage of machine gun fire tearing explosively down through the banister posts. The Germans are blown back off their feet, bullets chewing through them in clouds of smoke and blood, the entire group sprawling backward in a tangle of bodies. A dying German's Schmeisser goes BRRRAAAAP! at the ceiling and brings down a chandelier.

Abrupt, stunning silence. Fragments of banister flutter down and settle. A haze of cordite smoke hangs in the air. A VOICE calls from above:

HAMILL (O.S.)
Clear, up!

SGT. HILL
Clear, down!

Sarge looks to Miller. Everybody's stunned, trying to get a hold of their adrenalin.

SARGE
Enough to make you old.

MILLER
Let's hope.

Miller's group rises and turns, peering up...

...as a DOZEN AIRBORNE TROOPERS appear above, rising from behind what used to be the banister and stepping forward to look down. Leading them is CAPTAIN HAMILL, who gives Miller a puzzled look.

MILLER (CONT'D)
We've come for Private Ryan.

EXT - RAILROAD SWITCHING YARD - DUSK

The 101st holds the railhead with a defensive perimeter. There's some sporadic GUNFIRE to be heard, but this part of town is relatively secure. Hamill and his men are leading Miller's group across the tracks:

HAMILL
How was the road in?

MILLER
Scenic. We lost two jeeps and most of our ammo.

SARGE
(aimed at Miller)
Not to mention one of our men.

Miller glares at him. Hamill approaches a LIEUTENANT:

HAMILL
Get Private Ryan up here.

LIEUTENANT
(hollers back)
Ryan! Front and center!

A FEW MORE VOICES HOLLER BACK as the message is relayed. After a few moments, PRIVATE RYAN appears, coming across the tracks. He's nervous as hell -- he knows they've been looking for him, but he has no idea why and it's making him crazy. It doesn't help that all his fellow troopers are staring.

Miller's men are watching Ryan approach:

REIBEN
So that's the creep.

Ryan steps up, salutes Hamill.

RYAN
Sir, Private James Ryan reporting as ordered.

HAMILL
At ease. Captain Miller here would like to have a word with you.

Ryan faces Miller, more nervous by the moment.

RYAN
Sir? Word is you've been looking for me.

MILLER
That's right. I'm afraid I have some bad news.

Miller hesitates. Ryan's becoming petrified -- he can't even imagine what this is all about.

MILLER (CONT'D)
There's no easy way to say this, so I'll just say it. Fact is, all your brothers have died.

Color drains from Ryan's face -- he's shocked beyond words. He sits down on a steel switching box, finds his voice:

RYAN
Dead? They're dead?

MILLER
We've been sent to get you. You're going home.

RYAN
Oh my God...my brothers...my God...

Ryan promptly bursts into tears. Hamill squeezes his shoulder.

HAMILL
We're sorry for you, James. Can't tell you how much.

Ryan's turns his tear-streaked face to Miller, crying and hiccuping so hard he has trouble speaking:

RYAN
How...how did they...die?

MILLER
They were killed in action.

RYAN
In action? That can't be...

MILLER
I'm truly sorry.

RYAN
No, I mean it can't be. They're both still in grammar school.

Miller gets a sinking feeling -- something's wrong here.

MILLER
James Francis Ryan? Ohio?

RYAN
James Frederick Ryan. Minnesota.

A stunned pause. There aren't even words for this. Ryan bursts into tears all over again:

RYAN (CONT'D)
Does this mean my brothers are okay?

MILLER
I'm quite certain they are.

But Ryan just keeps crying harder, inconsolable. Guys are coming up, patting his shoulders, trying to calm him down. Miller, feeling utterly stupid, turns to Hamill.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Sorry for the trouble.

HAMILL
(keeping a straight face)
You know what they say about military intelligence.

They walk back to Miller's men as snickers spread along the perimeter -- paratroopers having a laugh at their expense.

MILLER
Mellish, try to raise Command. I'd like to have a word with them.

HAMILL
Radios have been out since this morning. Germans are scrambling this whole area.

Miller looks at Mellish -- try anyway. Mellish grabs the radio and starts cranking it to try and raise somebody:

MELLISH
God's laughing at us. He's looking down and laughing at us...

JACKSON
...laughing, hell, he's holding his ankles and howling...

REIBEN
...son of a bitch Ryan...gonna kill Him, that's all, just kill his ass...

SARGE
Sir? You all right?

MILLER
(tight)
Fine. Mellish?

MELLISH
Nothing, sir.

Miller takes a breath, composes himself.

HAMILL
At least you're heading in the right direction. Everybody else is west of us. Where's your map?

Sarge breaks out the map, lays it on the ground. Everybody crouches around as Hamill points:

HAMILL (CONT'D)
All our drop zones are indicated. At least what should have been our drop zones.

JPR.16

MILLER
What do you mean?

HAMILL
Most of our guys got scattered all over hell and gone parachuting in. Even with correct information, he could be anywhere.

SARGE
Correct information would be a good place to start. Assuming we ever get the radio up.

HAMILL
You won't, not until you get further west. Like I said, they're scrambling us pretty heavy.
(to Miller)
Look, I wouldn't even try to leave town right now. Germans got us in a noose.

MILLER
So when?

HAMILL
Last I heard, we got artillery coming up in strength sometime after midnight, few miles east. Gonna be a hell of a show, keep the enemy pretty distracted. You can slip out then, catch a few winks in the meantime.

MILLER
Yeah, okay, appreciate it.

HAMILL
Tough, huh? Three brothers?
(Miller shrugs)
We sure as hell could use your help here, but I understand what you're doing.

MILLER
Yeah?

HAMILL
Good luck.

MILLER
Thanks.

HAMILL
I mean it. Find him. Get him home.

Miller is a bit taken aback by Captain Hamill's forceful sincerity. He shakes it off and motions to his men. Let's go.

SAP16

CUT TO:

INT - CHURCH - NIGHT

A single stained-glass window remains intact -- an ANGEL watches over the righteous from a pall of heavenly light. TILT DOWN to Miller and his men settling in for the night in the ruins:

SARGE
Jackson, you're first watch.

Jackson grabs his rifle, goes to a sentry point where the wall has collapsed to create a sloping egress of rubble. ANGLE TO Reiben pacing and agitated. Everybody's on edge, emotions and nerves working overtime:

REIBEN
Somebody wanna explain the math of this mission to me?

MILLER
Math?

REIBEN
Yes, sir. How come they're ready to give up eight guys for one?

MELLISH
So the generals can look good for all the newspapers back home. All warm and fuzzy.

WADE
There's gotta be more to it than that.

REIBEN
Oh? Enlighten me, 'cause I really feel I need to know right about now.

WADE
It's a mission of mercy. Think of the poor guy's mother.

REIBEN
Hey, I got a mother, too. Sarge, you got a mother?

SARGE
Yeah, sweet lady.

REIBEN
Jackson? Mellish? See, we all got mothers...

MELLISH
Caparzo's got a mother.

REIBEN
Yeah, what about her? She's gonna get a telegram in a week or so saying her son died a hero in the line, and I'm guessing her heart's gonna be pretty much broken...
(to Mellish)
...wouldn't you say?

MELLISH
(softly)
Yeah. I'm guessing her heart's gonna break. Yeah.

REIBEN
So what makes Ryan's mother more important than Caparzo's? Or anybody else's?

JACKSON
God a'mighty, Reiben, give it a rest. You're killing me.

REIBEN
It's not me killing you, pal, it's Ryan. Caparzo's just the first, you wait and see.

WADE
Ryan didn't kill Caparzo. A German sniper did.

MELLISH
Might as well have been Ryan's finger on that trigger.
(off Wade's look)
We wouldn't even be out here if not for him. We'd be heading for Caen with 30,000 of our closest friends and a lot of cushy armor support.

REIBEN
Damn right. They tossed us out here like clay pigeons at a skeet shoot, and for what? Public relations? What Are we, some kinda freak USO tour?

Miller's getting a look of deep concern from Sarge -- this conversation's gone into "morale-for-shit" territory.

MILLER
Reiben, that's enough.

REIBEN
What about you, sir? You been awful quiet. What do you think?

MILLER
What's the matter with you? There's a chain of command. Griping goes one way -- up, never down. I don't gripe to you, I don't gripe in front Of you. How long you been in the army?

REIBEN
Sorry, sir, you're right...
(beat)
...but for the sake of argument. Say I was a major.

MILLER
In that case, I would say this is an excellent mission, with an extremely valuable objective, and worthy of my best efforts. Moreover, I feel heartfelt sorrow for the mother of Private James Ryan and will be more than willing to lay down my life and the lives of my men, especially you, Reiben, to help relieve her suffering.

Beat. Reiben glowers, trades a look with Mellish. That was quite a performance.

REIBEN
Sir, if you were not a captain, I would compliment you on an excellent load of shit.

MILLER
If I were not a captain, I would thank you for the compliment...
(beat)
...but since I am, I'll tell you to douse that goddamn light and get some goddamn rest while you goddamn can!

That pretty much ends the discussion. The men douse the light and settle down to get some sleep...

...except Miller. He sits alone in the dark, wide awake, trying to control the slight trembling in his hand. His gaze drifts up to the stained-glass window. The angel seems to be staring at him...waiting...wanting something...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - CHURCH - NIGHT

Sarge awakens, checks the time. He's past due for his shift. Concerned and cautious, he grabs his M-1 and rises, picks his way carefully through the rubble to the collapsed wall --

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

-- and emerges to find Miller gazing off, having a smoke.

SARGE
You're into my shift.

MILLER
I couldn't sleep anyway.

Sarge hunkers down. They share the cigarette back and forth, cupping it to guard against snipers, speaking in low tones:

MILLER (CONT'D)
I was thinking about the guys in this town. They're not gonna hold out until relief shows up. Germans are gonna clobber 'em.

SARGE
Seems that way.

MILLER
(beat, softly)
So what makes them expendable? You tell me that?

Sarge has no answer. Their attention goes to a FIGURE scurrying toward them from the next position over, hugging the shadows -- it's a PARATROOPER with the 101st:

PARATROOPER
Sir? I bum a smoke?

Miller hands him the rest of the pack.

MILLER
Keep the pack, Airborne.

PARATROOPER
That's swell, sir, thanks. I'll share 'em around.

He cups his hands, lights his cigarette off Miller's.

PARATROOPER (CONT'D)
Fellas all want you to know how grateful we are, sir.

MILLER
(beat, puzzled)
For what?

PARATROOPER
For going after one of ours. Means a lot to us, sir, really does.

Off he goes, scurrying back the way he came. Miller and Sarge look at each, don't even know what to say. Suddenly:

The horizon lights up. A DEEP RUMBLE rolls across the hills like a thousand bass drums, deeper than any thunder.

Miller and Sarge rise, gazing at the MASSIVE ARTILLERY BATTLE taking place just a few miles off. Once again, Miller's hand

starts shaking. This time Sarge doesn't pretend to ignore it. He gives Miller a look -- how long has that been going on?

MILLER
Comes and goes. I'll be fine.

Sarge doesn't like it, he's about to press the point -- but Reiben and the others appear from inside the church, drawn by the artillery battle. One hell of a wake-up call.

SARGE
Gear up. We're moving out.

The men stay transfixed for few moments longer. Upham stares, the lightning-like flashes reflecting in his glasses. Softly:

UPHAM
I'm not cut out for this.

REIBEN
Don't worry, Upham. God'll protect you.

UPHAM
Says who?

REIBEN
Eisenhower.

SPR.166

They head back inside to gear up.

CUT TO:

EXT - STE.-MARIE-DU-MONT - NIGHT

Miller and his men approach the outskirts of town where SEVERAL DOZEN AIRBORNE TROOPS are waiting to see them off. The troops close in from both sides, murmuring encouragement, patting shoulders, shaking hands. A GENTLE-FACED PRIVATE holds two bulky cartridge belts of B.A.R. ammo out to Reiben.

PRIVATE
Here.

Reiben's about to make some smartass comment, but the soldier's vulnerable expression stops him.

PRIVATE (CONT'D)
I had a brother died on Guadalcanal. Go on, take 'em.

Reiben looks to Miller, not sure what to say.

MILLER
Figure you guys need those just as much as us.

PRIVATE
(considers it)
Take one of 'em, at least.

REIBEN
(softly)
Okay. Thanks.

Miller and his men move on. The Airborne guys are handing over ammo as they pass, whatever they can spare. One guy hands Mellish an ammo belt for the machine gun:

SOLDIER #2
Hey, infantry, here's a belt for that thirty...

SOLDIER #3
...here's another one...

Mellish accepts both belts, nods. Somebody takes Upham by the wrist, carefully pours three M-1 bullets into his hand. It's all he's got. Upham hardly knows what to say, except:

UPHAM
Thanks.

Miller and his group walk out of town, leaving the doomed paratroopers of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont behind...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - PATH ALONG WOODED RIDGE - NIGHT

A mile further on. The artillery battle plays across the sky like thunder and lightning -- a stunning display of flashing clouds and rumbling sound.

Sarge is walking point. The others are behind him.

REIBEN
You know what the best thing that could happen is?

JACKSON
You step on a rusty nail, get lockjaw, and never say another word again as long as you live?

REIBEN
That's not it. The best thing that could happen is we find Ryan dead.

MILLER
Why's that?

UPR 166

REIBEN
Sir, consider the possibilities. A: Ryan is alive. We have to take him back to the beach. Knowing you, you don't let him carry my gear, even though he should, and we all get killed trying to keep him alive.

MILLER
Except for the last part, that one's not bad.

REIBEN
B: Ryan is dead. Blown up, let's say. The biggest piece is the size of a pea, so there's nothing left to find. We wander around until the Germans pick us off one by one.

MILLER
I don't like that one at all.

REIBEN
Neither do I, sir, but there's a worse one. C: We find Ryan wounded. Not only does he not carry my gear, we have to carry his gear. And him.

MILLER
That's a possibility.

REIBEN
That's why I'm saying, sir, best thing is we find him dead, more or less intact. We grab a dogtag and high-tail it back to the beach.

WADE
I don't think Ryan's mother would like that.

REIBEN
Don't start with the mother. Ever occur to you she might not even like the guy?

UPHAM
She's his mother.

REIBEN
So? Maybe he's been a pain in the ass since he was born. Maybe it was the other three she loved. Maybe she always wished she could send little Jimmy back for a refund.

MELLISH
Yeah. Suppose he killed Bessie the family cow, or burned down the barn, or pulled some other kinda farm screw up?

WADE
Who says he's off a farm?

MELLISH
He's Iowa, ain't he?

MILLER
Ohio.

MELLISH
Four letters, same difference. I bet he even looks like Lil' Abner, like in the funny papers. Big and dumb.

JACKSON
Lil' Abner's too good looking. I bet Ryan's more like Alley Oop.

REIBEN
Or Flat Top in Dick Tracy. You know, like someone hit him with a shovel...

Sarge stops. Everybody freezes. Listening. Waiting.

Sarge looks back, signals Miller -- somebody's coming.

Miller turns, motions "everybody off the path." The men pour off the road like oiled shadows, becoming one with the bushes and trees...

...and moments later, a PAIR OF GERMAN INFANTRYMEN come trudging into view.

The GIs tense up. Reiben eases the safety off his B.A.R., puts finger to trigger, looks to Miller -- do we open fire? Miller gives him a shake of the head and motions "let them go." The two infantrymen pass from sight. Pause...

...and now an entire GERMAN PLATOON comes trudging around the bend. Dozens of Wehrmacht soldiers, heavily armed.

Reiben's eyes widen. He eases his finger away from the trigger, throws Miller a look -- holy shit, sir.

The platoon passes, their boots no more than two feet from the faces of the hidden Americans. Upham is wide-eyed with fear.

The platoon fades from view. Miller motions for everybody to stay put. Everybody does...except Upham. He stands up, not paying attention, breathing a sigh of relief...

...and a WHIP-TAIL SQUAD appears. FOUR MEN with Schmeissers trail the main platoon by thirty yards, covering their rear. Upham stands frozen, exposed, barely concealed in the shadows.

Miller's furious. Everybody braces their weapons, preparing to open fire. The whip-tail squad draws closer...

...and passes by without noticing Upham. He could reach out and touch their shoulders, that's how close they come.

The whip-tail squad vanishes up the road. Everybody holds for long moments, remembering to breathe. Upham is weak-kneed, amazed he's still alive. He turns, ready to apologize ---- and somebody grabs him by the throat, slams him flat to the ground. It's Mellish, teeth bared, holding the tip of his combat knife to Upham's throat:

MELLISH
You pull something that stupid again, I'll kill you myself!

SARGE
Awright, enough!

Sarge pulls Mellish off, shoves him on his way. Upham rises, shaky with fear and guilt. The men are giving him shitty glares as they move out. Miller nails him with a look -- you coming? Upham picks up his rifle and hurries after them...

CUT TO:

EXT - WOODED RIDGE - DAWN

The light of dawn filters through the leaves. The SOUND OF DISTANT GUNS has been replaced by the CHIRPING OF BIRDS.

BOOM DOWN to a small clearing, where the men are having a breakfast of k-ration crackers and water. They're bone-weary, glad to have made it through the night. Upham's dispensing the food, pouring water from a canteen.

Nobody's looking at him. It's like he doesn't exist. The silence speaks volumes.

Upham comes back to Wade, who's divying the portions. He's the only one who seems to be acknowledging Upham's existence this morning. Upham hunkers down, still drained and pale from last night. Softly:

UPHAM
I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

WADE
You just gotta think, okay? Don't do anything unless you're told. Keep your eyes on the Captain, always. Or Sarge. Or the rest of us. Right?

Upham nods -- right, okay. Wade finishes counting out a final ration of crackers. He starts to rise, but Upham stops him.

UPHAM
I'll take 'em.

Wade sees the look on Upham's face -- please let me. Wade hands the crackers over. Upham heads up the rise toward:

A BREAK IN THE TREES

Where Miller stands alone over a spectacular view of the farm country, gazing at the dawn. Upham appears, hands him his crackers. Miller nods, takes a bite. An awkward beat.

UPHAM (CONT'D)
Sir? I wanted to apologize...

MILLER
(cuts him off)
You didn't know. From now on you will.

Upham nods, follows his gaze toward the dawn.

UPHAM
Beautiful. Looks like a Renoir.

MILLER
I was thinking Monet.

UPHAM
You know art, sir?

MILLER
(shrugs)
I know what I like.

UPHAM
Where you from, sir?

Miller pauses, smiles.

MILLER
What's the pool up to now?

UPHAM
(smiles, caught)
Three hundred bucks.

MILLER
Tell you what, Corporal. Let's let it get up to five hundred, I'll tell you all about myself, we'll split the money.

UPHAM
That's pretty sneaky, sir.

MILLER
Why do you think they made me an officer?

They fall silent, enjoying the dawn together.

CUT TO:

EXT - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

FRENCH REFUGEES are streaming by, a river of humanity -- old people, women, children. They're carrying their worldly possession on their backs or in carts. AMERICAN WOUNDED are being brought this way as well -- some walking, some being carried on jeeps or trucks...

FRESH AMERICAN TROOPS walk the road in the opposite direction, heading up toward the fighting. Occasional SUPPLY TRUCKS go past, bouncing and swaying over the ruts...

In close proximity to all this activity are:

MILLER AND HIS MEN

They're clustered around the radio as Mellish tries to pick up a clear signal. It's dicey, alternating between static, elctronic whines, and fragmented voices.

MELLISH
...I say again, this is Baker One Able! We are trying to get a message through to Command! Over!

VOICE (filtered)
(broken radio babble)
--ead you--aker One Abl--essage----
ignal--reaking up--ansmit--

MELLISH
Repeat, request you patch us through to Command, over!

VOICE
--crambli--andwidth--annot--ead you--
aterl--mus--brrrp--zzzzz--

And it fizzles off into PURE STATIC. Mellish tweaks the dial.

MELLISH
Shit! Lost him!

SARGE
It's not like you had him all that good, let's face it.

MILLER
Can you get him back?

MELLISH
No, sir, it's a blizzard. I got shit.

Sarge rises, looks to Miller.

SARGE
Now what?

Miller shoots him a look -- drop dead for asking. Miller stalks off toward the road. The others sigh, grab their gear, go after him...

MILLER

Walks against the flow of refugees, his men trailing behind.

MILLER
(muttering)
...goddamn radios don't work... chain of command doesn't work... nothing in this goddamn war works...

The men trade looks. Is he griping? Is that what that is?

MILLER (CONT'D)
Here's an idea. Let's split up into two groups and wander the countryside Calling his name. Sooner or later, he's bound to hear us.

SARGE
Good thought, sir, but could take a while.

MILLER
Let's ask the refugees, maybe they've seen him.
(stops an OLD COUPLE)
Parlez vous Ryan? Oui? Non?

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The old couple mutter to each other, decide Miller's crazy, move on. Miller and his men keep walking.

Coming up the road with the refugees is a LONG RAGGED COLUMN OF GERMAN PRISONERS escorted by AIRBORNE TROOPS. The paratroopers have seen some heavy action; many are walking wounded. Miller calls to the nearest group of them:

MILLER (CONT'D)
Hey! 101st! You know a guy named Ryan?

The men shake their heads, pass by. Miller keeps going, tries the next group:

MILLER (CONT'D)
Ryan? Anybody know Ryan?

The men pause. One of them looks at his buddy -- is that name familiar? He turns, hollers at a group further back:

PARATROOPER #1
Hey, Joe! Doesn't Michaelson pal around with a Ryan in B company?

JOE
(hollers back)
Yeah! I think so!

PARATROOPER #1
Get him up here, would you?

JOE nudges the man next to him -- MICHAELSON, who seems oblivious to the conversation so far. Joe motions "come on, up ahead, they want us." Miller and his men still don't get it, not until the pair arrive and the conversation begins:

MILLER
You know a guy named Ryan?

JOE
You'll have to speak up, sir, his hearing's not so good...

MICHAELSON
YOU'LL HAVE TO SPEAK UP, SIR, MY HEARING'S NOT SO GOOD!

JOE
...comes and goes. German grenade went off right next to his head...

MICHAELSON
IT COMES AND GOES! GERMAN GRENADE WENT OFF RIGHT NEXT TO MY--

MILLER
YEAH, YEAH, I GET IT! THESE GUYS SAY YOU KNOW RYAN?

MICHAELSON
WHO?

MILLER
RYAN! YOU KNOW RYAN?

MICHAELSON
JIMMY RYAN?

Miller's men are electrified -- this could be it.

MILLER
(nodding his head)
JAMES FRANCIS RYAN?

MICHAELSON
(nodding, then shaking)
NO! JAMES FRANCIS RYAN!

MILLER
THAT'S WHAT I SAID!

MICHAELSON
WHAT?

MELLISH
This is wracking my nerves.

MILLER
Anybody got a pencil?

Everybody starts patting pockets.

MILLER (CONT'D)
C'mon, a pencil! Anybody?

UPHAM (O.S.)
Yes, sir...

Miller turns, sees Upham holding a pencil stub with a deadpan (though unmistakably self-satisfied) look on his face.

UPHAM (CONT'D)
...a small one.

MILLER
(beat)
Write this down: "James Francis Ryan? Ohio? You know him?"

Upham jots the message, shows it to Michaelson.

MICHAELSON
COURSE I KNOW HIM! HE'S MY BEST BUDDY!

MILLER
Does he know where he is?

Upham jots and shows the message. Michaelson shakes his head.

MICHAELSON
WHO KNOWS WHERE ANYBODY IS? WE GOT SCATTERED ALL OVER THE DAMN MAP COMING IN...
(everybody deflates)
...BUT I CAN TELL YOU WHERE HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE!

MILLER
REALLY? WHERE?

MICHAELSON
WHAT?

MILLER
Upham...

Upham jots, holds the note up. Michaelson nods -- oh.

MICHAELSON
RAMELLE! HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE IN RAMELLE! B COMPANY WAS GOING AFTER SOME BRIDGE! DOES THAT HELP?

Miller's group is electrified again -- real news at last.

MILLER
(to Joe)
Look, I can't yell anymore. Will you tell him thanks when his hearing comes back?

JOE
No problem, sir.

The paratroopers move on. Sarge already has the map out:

SARGE
Ramelle. Twenty kilometers southwest.

Beat. Miller looks at the men. What are we waiting for? They heft their gear and keep walking as refugees stream past...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - HEDGEROW COUNTRY - DAY

Miller and his men are trudging down a hedgerow lane untouched by war...when a VOICE suddenly comes out of nowhere:

GIRL (O.S.)
Pssst! Vous êtes americains!

They drop into a crouch, weapons snapping up...

GIRL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ne tirez pas! je suis votre amie!

UPHAM
She says don't shoot!

...and a 13 year-old FRENCH FARM GIRL emerges from the brush.

GIRL
Il y en a un de vous qui parle français?

UPHAM
Oui, Moi.

GIRL
Merci mon dieu! Bon, maintenant il faut que vouz veniez tous avec moi, tous!

UPA 166

MILLER
What's she saying?

UPHAM
She wants us to come with her.

GIRL
Il y a des soldats blessés a la ferme! ils sont américains comme vous! ils sont tombés du ciel!

UPHAM
...says there are wounded Americans At her farm. Paratroopers, I think.

GIRL
Ils m'ont donné ça pour vous!

She pulls a note, thrusts it at them. Miller takes it, scans:

MILLER
"...we're wounded Americans...need help...please come..."

SARGE
Krauts could've written that. They've got translators, too.

MILLER
It's legit.

SARGE
How do you know?

MILLER
They signed it: "Mr. Thunder and Mr. Flash."

Miller nods to the girl -- lead the way.

EXT - WOODED AREA - DAY

We're traveling beneath a canopy of trees. TILT DOWN to reveal the girl leading Miller and his men through the woods:

GIRL
Mon grand-pre a trouvé un de vos soldats dans un arbre avec une jambe cassée...

UPHAM
Her grandfather found one of our guys hung up in a tree with a busted leg...

GIRL
(pointing at her side)
...l'autre a une balle dans le côté...juste là...et c'est méchamment infecté...

UPHAM
The other man's got a bullet wound. It's badly infected...

GIRL
On les a cachés a la ferme, mais on peut pas les garder pour toujours! il y a des allemands partout ici...

UPHAM
They've been hiding our guys in their barn, but they're worried about the Germans showing up...

SARGE
How close are we?

UPHAM
C'est encore loin?

GIRL
Non non, c'est juste là...

She points -- and stops, her voice trailing off. They follow her gaze. Dark smoke is rising beyond the trees.

GIRL (CONT'D)
Oh! mon Dieu...

She takes off running with her heart in her throat. Miller tries to grab her, but too late...

MILLER
Wait! Shit!

EXT - FARM - DAY

The girl comes running out of the woods. Miller and his men come darting along the treeline, weapons ready, trying to cover the girl as she runs...

The farmhouse is burning. Worse yet, there are bodies sprawled in the mud -- her entire FAMILY has been shot, including her little brother. The only survivor is an OLD MAN kneeling over the bodies, weeping his heart out -- the grandfather.

GIRL
Grand-pre!

She runs across the yard, throws herself into his arms. They cling tightly together, sobbing.

OLD MAN
Les allemands sont venus. Il ne reste plus que nous maintenant. Juste nous deux...

Miller and the men approach. Upham doesn't have to translate, they know what's being said. They look around, faces grim and strained. Even the FARM ANIMALS have been shot...

...and sprawled in the sty among the dead pigs are the TWO PARATROOPERS still clutching their weapons, spent shell casings all around. They went down fighting.

Miller steps in, crouches, checks their dogtags just to make sure. No Ryan. The men just stare down. Softly:

REIBEN
God damn Krauts. God damn 'em all to hell.

EXT - FARM - DUSK

The sun is setting over the fields. Miller and his men are sitting at the treeline, tired and filthy from digging. Reiben enters frame, drops his shovel, grabs a canteen. Nobody's saying anything. Just gazing off.

The girl and her grandfather stand together at the fresh gravesite some distance away. Figures in a landscape.

REIBEN
Never was a German worth a damn. They're all pricks.

Pause. Nobody seems to feel much like arguing, but they're all thinking about it.

MILLER
What about Beethoven? You said Beethoven was the greatest composer ever lived.

REIBEN
He was, sir. Doesn't mean he wasn't a prick, though, does it? He was German, so it stands to reason.

UPHAM
They can't all be pricks.

REIBEN
You saw what they did. Even shot a kid. How old was he, ten?
(beat)
No such thing as a decent German. Try and name one. Go ahead, you can't. There aren't any.

PAUSE. SOFTLY:

WADE
Albert Schweitzer.

REIBEN
What?

WADE
I said, Albert Schweitzer.

REIBEN
What makes him glow?

WADE
He decides one day he's not doing enough for mankind, so he gets himself a medical degree, goes off to Africa to spend the rest of his life treating the natives. No reason other than they need it and he wants to help. Guy's been there thirty years now.
(off their looks)
It's because of him I'm gonna be a doctor. He's German.

REIBEN
Leave it to you to find the exception.

Wade nods his head out toward the gravesite.

WADE
You want me to explain that? I can't. You asked me to name a decent German, so I did.

Wade stands, grabs his gear, heads off. The others rise, staring after him, proceed to gear up:

REIBEN
Guy could find something nice to say about anybody. Ask him about Hitler, he'll say: "anybody who likes dogs can't be all bad."

MILLER
Reiben? Lose an argument for once.

REIBEN
Yes, sir.

DISSOLVE TO:

A PAIR OF GI BOOTS enters frame, crunching slowly across open ground. ANGLE UP to Mellish walking point...

EXT - HEDGEROW FIELD - DAY

...as the men walk carefully through the woods to the edge of a beautiful field of tall grass. The last of the morning dew is just burning off.

Miller notices something. He signals stop, crouches and scans the field and the hedgerow on the far side.

Sarge and Jackson ease up next to him. Jackson points to some trees nearby, freshly shattered and pockmarked with bullets.

Wade calls quietly from a tangle of brush:

WADE
Captain.

Staying low, they join Wade, who has found:

A DEAD AMERICAN PARATROOPER. A trail of blood and flattened grass leads from the field. They gaze out, seeing FOUR MORE BODIES sprawled in the grass out there.

MILLER
(scans the far hedgerow)
In the shadow by those two trees.

SARGE
My guess, too.

UPHAM
What is it?

WADE
Machine gun.

Miller pulls back into the cover of the brush, stands and takes off his pack.

REIBEN
Sir, why don't we go around it?

MILLER
We can't leave it here.

SARGE
We left those 88s.

MILLER (CONT'D)
They don't send planes to put out machine guns.
(beat)
Three runners with suppressing fire. I'll go right. Reiben, you're fast, you're up the middle. Who's taking left?

UPHAM
Sir? I ran the 220 in high school in twenty-four-five.

JACKSON
Shit, that's nothing, I ran twenty-two flat. Would'a made the state finals if some bastard hadn't tripped me.

SAP166

MILLER
Okay, Jackson goes left. We draw fire and work up. Everybody else spread out along the treeline.

The men spread out. Sarge pulls Miller aside:

SARGE
Sir? Rule of thumb says you detail this one out.

MILLER
What rule of thumb is that?

SARGE
How about I go right?

MILLER
How about you take your position?

Sarge hesiates, sees no point in arguing. He moves off, finds a spot from which to fire. The men are in position. Miller looks to Jackson and Reiben -- ready? They nod.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Now.

Miller and Jackson take off at full runs onto opposite sides of the field, with reiben going up the middle. Nothing happens for a moment...

...and then a GERMAN MACHINE GUN OPENS UP, muderously loud, shattering the quiet. The GIs in the treeline RETURN FIRE.

THE MACHINE GUN NEST

Contains THREE GERMANS. We don't see faces. One man's on the gun, a second feeds the belt, a third brings up more ammo...

MILLER

Draws the first fire. He races the bullets, dives for cover, bullets screaming over him ---- and the machine gun swings toward Reiben, who also hits the dirt with bullets grazing his helmet ---- and it swings toward Jackson, who also dives ---- but by now Miller's back up and running, drawing the machine gun in his direction. He dives, rolls ---- and then it's Reiben again, drawing gunfire, diving ---- and Jackson, running, barely making it to safety --

-- and so on, the runners leap-frogging and gaining yards, working their way closer until:

A bullet slaps Jackson in the arm. He spins and goes down.

JACKSON
AAHHH, SHIT!

Reiben's up and running, drawing fire away from Jackson...

And then Miller, drawing fire away from Reiben...

Now Reiben again, getting closer, just about grenade-throwing range...

Now Miller, closing in from the other side, pulling a grenade, angling for a throw...

And then Wade breaks cover, trying to get to Upham. The machine gun swings, OPENS FIRE. Wade stumbles, sits down, presses his stomach as if punched. He looks almost embarrassed. A long exhale of breath...

WADE
....oh...stupid...

UPHAM
WADE!

Miller and Reiben pop their pins and throw. The grenades arc into the nest, clattering off concrete. BOOM! Nothing now but silence and billowing dust. All eyes go to Wade...

SARGE
Wade? You hit?

No answer. Everybody starts toward Wade from all directions. Miller and Reiben come running, faster and faster...

Upham's the first one there. Jackson's next, clutching his grazed arm, then the others. Miller and Reiben arrive last, stunned to see:

Wade took five bullets in the abdomen (four are in the stomach area, but one is higher, just below the right nipple). He looks astonished by the pain, can barely breath. A stunned, frozen beat --

MILLER
Oh, Wade, oh, Jesus Christ...

-- and they throw themselves to the ground, hands grabbing and ripping through the medical pack in a flurry, tearing Wade's shirt open, everybody shouting and hollering at once:

MILLER (CONT'D)
--sulfa, gimme the sulfa--

SARGE
--shit, he's bleeding, get pressure on it--

MELLISH
--help me out, Upham, shit, use your hands--

JACKSON
--me, goddamn it, he was comin' after me--

MILLER
--more sulfa, I need more sulfa--

JACKSON
--oh, God, Jesus--

MELLISH
--don't die, Wade, don't you do it--

SARGE
--morphine, he needs morphine--

They're injecting morphine, pouring sulfa, getting bloody. It's all a blur, a rush of adrenalin and panicked effort.

MILLER
Wade? Wade? Can you hear me?

Wade is looking up at them, shaking, riding the pain.

WADE
..how...bad...

MILLER
You're fine, you'll be okay...

Wade's hand shoots up, grips Miller's wrist.

WADE
...don't bullshit me...

MILLER
(beat)
I don't know, Wade, I'm not a doctor, it doesn't look good.

The morphine's kicking in. Wade's shaking subsides. He tries to raise his head to see, but can't, gasping with the effort.

WADE
...am I shot...in the spine?

MILLER
I dunno. Lift him up a little...
Carefully...carefully...

The others maintain pressure on the wounds as Sarge helps Miller lift Wade slightly up on one side. Miller puts his hand under him, running his hand down his back. Blood drizzles through his fingers from several gaping exit holes. Wade's eyes are fixed on his, waiting for the answer.

MILLER (CONT'D)
(nods)
Exit wound right on the spine, small of the back. It's torn up.

Wade reacts with a soft sob. Miller pulls his hand out, now covered with blood and tissue, eases Wade gently back down. The others keep pressure on the wounds (especially the one below the right nipple, Mellish and Upham are <u>both</u> pressing on that one because it's bleeding so much).

WADE
...can't move...

MELLISH
That don't mean you're dead, Wade, it don't goddamn mean it!

Wade tries to put his hand to his abdomen to check the wounds, but misses -- his coordination is gone.

WADE
...help me...

Miller takes his wrist, guiding his hand. Wade presses on the wounds, trying to determine their severity by feel.

WADE (CONT'D)
...is anything...bleeding worse than others...

MELLISH
Yeah, me and Upham are pressing on it, it's bleeding bad...

WADE
...show me...

They guide his hand to the wound below the right nipple. Wade feels it. Pushes his finger all the way down into it as blood wells up past his knuckles. The others watch in horror.

WADE (CONT'D)
...oh god...my liver...it's my liver...

UPHAM
What do we do about it? Tell us what to do!

Wade gives Miller a look, shakes his head. The message in his eyes is clear -- there's nothing you can do. Not a thing.

WADE
...could use a little extra morphine...really could...

Beat. Their eyes locked. Miller realizes what he's asking.

MILLER
(to Sarge)
More morphine.

Sarge hands it to him. Miller injects Wade.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Another one.

Sagre hesitates. He and the others are starting to realize what's going on. Miller snaps at him:

MILLER (CONT'D)
I said another one, goddamn it!

Sarge hands it over. Miller injects Wade a third time.

The men can do nothing but wait. They're still keeping pressure on his wounds, which gives everything the appearance of a strange laying on of hands...

Wade is drifting, feeling the full effects of the drug kicking in. He looks at Upham, gives him a faint smile. Eyes glazing. Going away...

...and they actually feel the life leaving his body under their hands.

The aftermath of silence seems to last forever. Nobody knowing what to say. Nobody wanting to be the first to speak.

A soft sob. Upham's crying.

VOICE (O.S.)
Kamerad!

They whip their heads around, amazed to see a GERMAN SOLDIER staggering toward them from the direction of the machine gun

Nest, arms raised and head bleeding...

GERMAN
Kamerad! Ich ergebe mich! Nicht schiessen!

Reiben's amazement gives way to rage. He grabs an M-1, lunges to his feet, and OPENS FIRE before anybody can react --

REIBEN
YOU SON OF A BITCH!

MILLER
Reiben!

-- and the German drops for cover as carbine rounds rip the dirt all around him. Miller slams into Reiben from behind, spins him around, tries to wrestle the weapon away...

MILLER (CONT'D)
Hold your fire!

...and the brief tug-of-war ends with Miller ramming the rifle into Reiben's gut and knocking him on his ass. Miller stands over him, catching his breath...

MILLER (CONT'D)
We don't shoot prisoners!

...and the German rises again on shaky legs, arms upraised...

GERMAN
Nicht schiessen! Ich will mich ergeben!

...but Reiben's still gripped by rage -- he lunges to his feet and goes after the German. The German turns, tries to run...

MILLER
Reiben, goddamn it!

...and Reiben takes the man down with a flying tackle. He rolls him over and starts beating the shit out of him, fists flying, punching him in the face...

The others arrive, drag Reiben off. Sarge gets him in a headlock, like a cowboy wrestling a steer.

SARGE
REIBEN, ARE YOU GONNA CALM DOWN OR AM I GONNA STOMP YOUR GUTS? YOU HEAR ME? NOW EASE OFF!

Reiben eases off, forces himself calm. Sarge lets him go. The German looks up at Miller, battered and bloody, voice small:

GERMAN
...bitte...tötet mich nicht...Ich will mich ergeben...

MILLER
Check him for weapons.

Mellish and Sarge pat the German down. Mellish finds a Wehrmacht dagger, holds it up.

MELLISH
What's this for? Fricassee a few GIs, you piece of shit?

They drag the terrified German to his feet. He keeps his hands in the air. Reiben's glowering, barely restraining himself.

REIBEN
Ask him one thing for me. I wanna know if it was his finger on the trigger that took down Wade.

SARGE
It doesn't matter. Wade's dead just the same.

UPHAM
We're not just gonna leave him there like that...or the others...are we, sir?

The men all look to Miller.

MILLER
Organize a burial detail. Put the German to work, too. Jackson, you all right?

JACKSON
Bullet took a bite out of my arm. I'll be all right.

MILLER
Get it cleaned and dressed. You and I stand watch -- you're south perimeter, I'm north.

Miller speaks with authority, but something's missing. There's a dead spot in his eyes. It's subtle, only Sarge really notices. He watches Miller turn and walk away.

SARGE
You heard the man. Move your asses.

EXT - HEDGREROW FIELD - DAY

Dark clouds gathering. Miller's at the edge of the field, sitting and staring off at the horizon, a cigarette burned down nearly to his lips. His concentration seems intense...

...and we realize he's desperately trying to control the shaking in his hand. It's clenched tight.

Sarge appears, coming up from behind. Miller realizes he's not alone. Sarge sits, waits. (The burial detail is at work b.g.) Nothing is said for a time, and then:

MILLER
What was that kid's name in North Africa? The goofy one who did the handstands...

SARGE
Vecchio.

MILLER
Vecchio. Right. Vecchio.
(softly)
What a goofy kid.

Sarge nods. A stretch of silence. Miller looks at him.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Know what makes a good officer? First thing they teach you?

SARGE
What's that?

MILLER (CONT'D)
Lie to your men.
(off his look)
Not in so many words, maybe, but that's what it boils down to. Tell 'em it's okay, tell 'em they won't die...or if they do, it'll mean something. Keep their morale up, keep 'em going, tell 'em it's all for a reason. And then lie to yourself...convince yourself you're not full of shit...

SARGE
Does it work?

MILLER
Most of the time. Some guy dies, you say no big deal...because of

MILLER (CONT'D)
him, three other guys'll live. Or five. Or ten. Maybe a hundred. You you work the numbers any way you want...long as it keeps you going. So you forget that guy, pretend you never even knew him. Makes it easier to send the next guy down.

SARGE
(pause, softly)
The numbers catching up with you, John?

Miller ponders the question.

MILLER
Who the hell is Ryan anyway? I wouldn't know him to look at him. You put him in front of me side by side with Wade, tell me I have to shoot one or the other...no contest. I'm not gonna trade Wade for this guy. Not a chance.

But they did trade Wade for Ryan. Sarge looks at Miller's face, sees that dead spot in his eyes.

SARGE
Captain? All due respect, sir. I think you're just about used up.

Miller says nothing. No argument.

A ROW OF RIFLES

Protrude from the ground as grave markers, dogtags hanging off the triggers. Reiben and the others are done with burial detail. They're sitting and waiting, having a smoke. Somebody passes the pack to Jackson. He takes one...and sees the German staring. Jackson hesitates, offers. The German takes a cigarette, nods thanks. Reiben glances over.

REIBEN
What are you giving him a smoke for? What are you, stupid?

JACKSON
He did his share of digging.

MELLISH
He should, the bastard.

JACKSON
C'mon, pass the lighter.

REIBEN
Oh, he gets my lighter, too? What next, press his trousers?

Jackson waits. Reiben gives in, tosses his Zippo. The German catches it, lights up, clicks it shut. He notices the lighter is engraved -- a Mickey Mouse hand-done in rough GI style.

GERMAN
Micky Maus.

They all look at him. He gives them a tentative smile...and mimes a steamboat wheel, bouncing jauntily up and down.

GERMAN (CONT'D)
Steamboat Willie. Oompah, oompah...

REIBEN
Tell Steamboat Willie to cut the shit or I'll kill him. I don't care what the Captain says.

Upham motions the German silent -- this is not the time. The German complies, passes the lighter to Jackson. (NOTE: From now on the German will be referred to as Steamboat Willie.)

MELLISH
Goose-stepping asshole. Bet it was him who killed Wade.

REIBEN
Not just him. Ryan, too, that piece of shit.
(off their looks)
That's two of us he's gotten killed. Hitler should pin a medal on the prick. There's gonna be payback, just wait.

Miller and Sarge walk up.

SARGE
Gear up, we're moving out.

Everybody hesitates. Upham says what they're all thinking:

UPHAM
Shouldn't we say a few words? For Wade, I mean?

MILLER
Wade who? I knew a Wade once, but he's dead. He died so long ago nobody remembers him. Now get off your ass and gear up.

Looks are traded, but nobody argues. They rise as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - RIDGE - NEARING DUSK

The sun is descending from a canopy of clouds. Miller and his men traverse the ridge with Steamboat Willie, heading into the farm valley below...

EXT - FARM VALLEY - DUSK

They come trudging across a field. Upham's moving among the men, passing out the last of the meager k-ration crackers.

SARGE
That the last of it?

UPHAM
'Fraid so.

JACKSON
Screw it, it's like eating cardboard anyway.

MELLISH
I'm so hungry I'd eat anything right now...

Upham appears at that moment to give him his cracker. Mellish shoots him the most baleful look imaginable -- almost insane.

MELLISH (CONT'D)
You're starting to look like a leg of lamb with mint sauce.

Upham gives him the cracker, hurries nervously on.

REIBEN
Let's not talk about food, okay? Anything else is fine. Not food.

The men fall silent in tacit agreement. There's a SOFT MOO off to the right. They glance idly in that direction, see a COW lying in the grass some twenty yards away. They think nothing of it, keep walking...

...until it starts to dawn on them like a slow-burning fuse, a look of "hey, wait a minute" on their faces. They pause.

MELLISH
Am I nuts, or did we just pass forty or fifty steaks back there?

JACKSON
Could be sixty.

They all look to Miller, who's very hesitant about this:

MILLER
Fellas. It's not that I don't sympathize, believe me -- but I wonder if this is the proper venue for a Texas-style cookout. The Germans are bound to see a fire...

REIBEN
Sir, there are fires all over. What's one more?

He points. A town is burning on the horizon.

MELLISH
Captain, you say the word, I will personally drag that cow twenty miles to that town over there and hold it over a burning building.

Miller hesitates, looks to Sarge.

SARGE
We could build a small fire inside a barn...long as we're careful.
(beat)
We need food, sir. There's no getting around that.

Miller thinks, scans their expectant faces. Finally:

MILLER
Let's go shoot the cow.

The men are delighted, turn around and go back.

The cow watches them approach with dark, languid eyes. She lets out a SOFT MOO as they gather.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Okay, who's gonna do it?

The men glance around, hoping for a volunteer.

SARGE
C'mon, guys, we're in a war, for Chrissakes. Shooting a cow should not present a problem.

UPHAM
Maybe we should draw straws.

REIBEN
Screw that, I'll do it. Step aside.

He moves in front of the cow, clicks the safety off his M-1.

REIBEN (CONT'D)
Any last requests? Blindfold?
Cigarette?

She just stares at him. He raises his rifle, aims right between her eyes...and hesitates as:

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Entschuldigung, ich möchte nicht unterbrechen...aber vielleicht solltet Ihr sie noch nicht erschiessen.

UPHAM
He says we shouldn't shoot her yet...warum nicht?

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Ich denke, sie steht kurz vor 'ner Geburt.

Upham goes pale, peers toward the back of the cow.

REIBEN
What? What is it?

UPHAM
She's about to give birth.

A long, frozen beat.

MILLER
You're kidding me.

UPHAM
I don't think so, sir.

REIBEN
Jackson, you're a country boy, check it out.

Jackson circles behind the cow and squats down, peering.

JACKSON
Oh, yeah. She wants to pop all right. I think she needs help. C'mon, Reiben, learn something...

REIBEN
...oh no, not me...

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
(crouching)
Hier, ich glaub' ich kann helfen...

JACKSON
We need a third man. Upham, hunker down here, boy...

Upham looks to Miller and Sarge -- do I have to?

SARGE
Don't argue, Corporal, just do it.

MILLER
That's an order.

Upham squats down, looking distinctly queasy.

JACKSON
C'mon, don't be squeamish, it's just a cow. Reach up in there...

UPHAM
...oh, God...

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Fertig? Auf drei...

UPHAM
...on three, we go on three...

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Eins...zwei...drei!

The three men pull for all they're worth...and are rewarded with a brand new calf. It slides out, thrashes unsteadily to its feet. It totters over to momma and starts to feed.

Pause. Miller and his men start sneaking looks at one another. Somebody finally says what's on everybody's mind:

REIBEN
I'm not as hungry as I thought.

JACKSON
Me neither.

MELLISH
I can wait.

They move on, leaving the cow behind as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - WOODS - NIGHT

Miller and his men finish digging in for the night -- they've expanded a ditch with shovels to create a communal foxhole. Everybody's exhausted beyond words -- trading shovels for blankets, settling in, trying to get comfortable.

SARGE
Reiben, you're first watch.

Reiben sighs, grabs his rifle. Miller tosses him a blanket.

MILLER
I know you're tired, but stay sharp.

REIBEN
Yes sir, sharp, that's me...

Reiben climbs up out of the ditch, sits cross-legged on the edge, settles in. He pulls the blanket around himself, rifle propped between his knees.

REIBEN (CONT'D)
...sharp as a tack...

SOFT SNORING from below. The others are already falling asleep. Reiben finds himself alone, staring off at the woods, listening to crickets in the night...

REIBEN (CONT'D)
...sharp...

...and it soon becomes apparent that he's desperately trying to stay awake. And it seems the harder he tries, the more sleep wants to claim him...the more it wants to make him...

...drift off...

No! He shakes himself awake, forces his eyes open. Not gonna drift off that easy, not a chance...no way...

...I'll just stare at the night...listen to the crickets chirping...nothing moving out there...

...quiet and dark as can be...stay sharp...that's me...

His head nods. His helmet goes clunk against the rifle. Let's face it, the poor bastard just fell asleep.

CAMERA PULLS SLOWLY BACK. Reiben's dead to the world, still sitting upright...

THEN, IN THE BACKGROUND:

A GERMAN SOLDIER with a Schmeisser enters the clearing from the edge of frame, not ten yards away...

...and then ANOTHER GERMAN...and then TWO MORE...and, holy shit, there are dozens of them in the shadows...

The first German looks over this way, sees Reiben sitting there (just a shadowy figure from where he's standing).

GERMAN #1
(turns, loud whisper)
Das ist es, genau hier!

Reiben snaps wide awake. Frozen like a statue. Did I just hear German being spoken behind me?

A flurry of activity and noise suddenly bursts on us as a COMPANY OF WEHRMACHT converges on this area: ENGINES growling, VOICES calling out, lights sweeping through the foliage...

The GIs wake up in a total panic, thrashing their blankets aside, grabbing for weapons. Hands reach up and grab Reiben, yank him down into the ditch. Everybody's expecting to go out in a blaze of gunfire at any moment...

...but the Germans are just going about their business in the background. DIESEL ENGINES ROAR CLOSER. A GERMAN SOLDIER backs slowly across the clearing, motioning with his hands...

GERMAN #3
Ja, das ist gut...weiter...nach links...etwas weiter...

...and the MUZZLE OF A TIGER TANK comes easing through the low branches.

GERMAN #3 (CONT'D)
Gut! Halt hier!

The muzzle stops -- that's all we'll see of the tank. For that matter, everything around us is more suggested than seen; we're conveying an impression of scale with noises, lights, voices calling to one another. Somebody hollers loudly:

VOICE (O.S.)
Abschalten! Alle ruhig sein!

We hear ENGINES SHUTTING DOWN all over the area...

...and silence takes over again. The night returns.

Miller and the others are frozen f.g., holding their breath, fingers on triggers. If it were physically possible for human beings to shit bricks, that's exactly what they'd be doing.

Germans are puttering around b.g., making camp, getting homey. One guy's whistling "Pretty Baby" under his breath. Now that it's quiet, they speak in low tones or whispers.

GERMANS #4 and #5 are at the back of a supply truck, fiddling with a shortwave radio. They go past a speech by Goebbels, past a broadcast of Wagner's "The Ring"...and tune in to Armed Forces Radio. It's the Benny Goodman Orchestra performing "How High the Moon" with vocalist Helen Forrest.

GERMAN #4
(whispering)
Benny Goodman...klasse...

GERMAN #5
(motioning)
Sshhh...mach's leiser...

They tweak the volume down and drift away to other parts of the clearing, going about their business.

A portly infantryman named DIETER settles in no more than fifteen feet from Miller and our group. He pulls off his boots, rubs his aching feet. He looks over this way, calls softly to our guys in the ditch:

DIETER
Habt Ihr mal 'ne Zigarette?

Upham throws a look of panic -- he's talking to us!

DIETER (CONT'D)
Du da, im Graben. Ich rede mit Dir.
Haste 'ne Zigarette?

Upham's white as a sheet. Facial expressions and hand gestures come in a jumbled rush: for God's sakes, don't answer -- we have to answer -- what are you, nuts? -- what if he comes over here? -- shit -- okay, say something -- what should I say?

Dieter rises, peering, wondering why they don't answer:

DIETER (CONT'D)
Stimmt was nicht?

UPHAM FINALLY SPEAKS UP:

UPHAM
Uh...nein. Wir suchen nach 'ner Zigarette.

DIETER
Wunderbar, danke.

Dieter turns away, starts puttering with his gear. A fierce

Flurry of whispering ensues:

UPHAM
Who's got a cigarette?

MILLER
What for?

UPHAM
He wants a cigarette! Gimme a damn cigarette!

Somebody hands him the rest of a pack.

SARGE
Now what, genius? Throw it at him?

Upham's mind races. Dieter's looking this way again.

DIETER
Und: wie sieht's aus?

Steamboat Willie motions to Upham -- here, give me the damn cigarettes! Everybody looks to Miller -- we gonna trust the prisoner? Miller sees no choice, whispers:

MILLER
He tries any shit, he takes the first bullet.

UPHAM
(translates)
Wenn Du irgendwas versuchst, erschiessen wir Dich.

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Willie tosses Miller an irritated look -- duh, no kidding. He rises from the ditch, walks over to Dieter.

Our guys hold their breath. Praying.

Willie offers a cigarette from the pack. Dieter takes one, nods thanks...and pats his pockets. Beat.

DIETER
Hast Du Feuer?

No need to translate that gesture. Miller and the men roll their eyes toward heaven -- shit!

Steamboat Willie turns, comes back. He crouches at the edge of the ditch and reaches down, snapping his fingers for the lighter -- c'mon, c'mon.

Reiben's patting his pockets, eyes wide. Holy crap, where's my lighter? They launch into a frantic search -- shit, where the

Hell's the goddamn lighter?

Reiben finds it -- here! Everybody sags with relief. Steamboat Willie takes it, goes back to Dieter, lights his cigarette.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Danke.

Dieter blows the smoke out, checks the cigarette.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Amerikanische? Wo zum Teufel hast'n amerikanische Zigaretten her?

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
(hesitates)
Von Amerikanern, natürlich.

Dieter chuckles appreciatively, notices the lighter.

DIETER
Micky Maus? Kann ich mal sehen?

He takes the lighter, clicks it admiringly a few times.

DIETER (CONT'D)
Willst Du tauschen?

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
(considers a beat)
Hast Du irgend etwas zu essen?

DIETER
Massig. Ich tausch' Dir gegen das Feuerzeug und mehr Zigaretten.

Steamboat Willie nods -- done deal. Dieter happily pockets the lighter. Steamboat Willie heads back. In whispers:

REIBEN
Son of a bitch stole my lighter...

UPHAM
We're swapping for food.

SARGE
Really?

Looks are traded -- this could be a good idea.

MILLER
C'mon, c'mon, cigarettes...

The GIs turn out their pockets, handing up cigarettes and whatever else they've got. Mellish hands up a yo-yo. Steamboat

Willie takes it, gives him a look -- a yo-yo? Mellish responds with a shooing motion -- go on, trade it.

In the b.g., Dieter's been raiding the larder for sausages, cheese, bread, a slab of bacon...but he can't find the knife. He turns, calls softly to Steamboat Willie:

DIETER
Bring ein Messer mit.

Steamboat Willie looks at Upham -- good luck breaking that news. Upham cringes a bit as he does:

UPHAM
He needs a knife.

REIBEN
Christ, let's just give the Kraut my rifle.

JACKSON
We've gone this far, haven't we?

Beat. Miller nods, looks to Mellish.

MILLER
Give the Kraut his knife back.

MELLISH
Jackson's got it.

JACKSON
No I don't, you had it last...

MELLISH
...no I didn't, you did...

A frantic search fails to turn it up. Exasperated, Miller pulls his own combat knife, hands it up to Steamboat Willie.

MILLER
I better get that back.

Steamboat Willie nods like he understands, goes back to Dieter, starts unloading the goods: cigarettes, yo-yo...

DIETER
Ein Jojo?

Willie shrugs -- why not? And then he proudly offers up the final item: Miller's combat knife.

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Ich hab' sogar ein amerikanisches Armee-Messer.

UPHAM
He just traded your knife...

MILLER
Son of a bitch...

The transaction goes down -- Dieter carves off hunks of bacon, slabs of cheese, sausages, half a loaf of bread, a few tins of sardines. Steamboat Willie gathers it all up.

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
War mir ein Vergnügen, mit Euch Geschäfte zu machen.

DIETER
Jederzeit...

Steamboat Willie comes back, re-joins Miller and the others in the ditch. There's a pause, everybody staring at the food as if it were the Grail itself...and then Steamboat Willie earns a few grateful smiles, a nod or two of growing respect -- wow, that was good, you actually pulled it off...

The food is passed around, bitten into, torn apart, consumed. No mistaking the joy in the faces of these men -- hell, we got us a feast! Hey, pass that cheese...whoa, slow down on the salami, I haven't had any yet...

...and suddenly there's frantic scurrying in the clearing behind them, some fast whispering:

GERMANS
(various, ad-lib)
Stell's ab...Scheisse, er kommt...

The Germans kill the shortwave, hide their stuff, scramble to look soldierly...

...as MAJOR HOESS strolls into the clearing. He's a frosty bastard, an S.S. tank commander in black Panzer gear, the Aryan ideal -- blond, flinty blue eyes, broad shoulders, perfect posture. He peers around, speaks ever so softly:

HOESS
Ich dachte, ich hör Musik. Benny Goodman.

He gives them a faint, steely smile. I must have imagined it. Good thing, too...for all your sakes. He walks on...

...right past our GIs in the ditch. His boots pass a mere foot or two above their heads...and then he's gone, leaving one thought on everybody's minds. Sarge whispers it to Miller:

SARGE
What happens in the morning? They'll see us at first light...

Miller has no answer for them. Everybody falls silent as we

DISSOLVE TO:

Fog. Glorious, wonderful fog. Thick as pea-soup.

We hear DIESEL ENGINES ROAR. A HUGE SHAPE goes by -- a tank. In its wake trudges German infantry, though we see them only as vague shapes. It's dawn, the Germans are leaving...

BOOM DOWN to Miller and his men in the ditch. They're holding their breath, listening to the Germans depart, scarcely able to believe their good luck.

CUT TO:

EXT - FIELD - MORNING

An expansive, empty field (except for one solitary tree). The fog has lifted. Steamboat Willie stands facing Miller and the men, waiting. Miller looks to Upham.

MILLER
Tell him thanks. You know, for bailing us out last night.

UPHAM
Mein Hauptmann bedankt sich für die Hilfe letzte Nacht.

Steamboat Willie nods. Miller pulls a canteen, tosses it to him, pulls a bandana.

MILLER
I don't want him to see what direction we go, so he's gonna walk with a blindfold for a while. Just tell him to go a thousand paces, then he can take it off.

UPHAM
Wir werden Dir die Augen verbinden. Lauf' eintausend Schritte, dann kannst du die Binde abnehmen.

Steamboat Willie nods, pauses.

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Tut mir leid für den Mann, den ihr verloren habt. Den Sanitäter. Das ist halt Krieg, nicht wahr?

UPHAM
He says he's sorry about Wade. He just wanted us to know that.

REIBEN
(beat)
Tell him to kiss my ass. He owes me a lighter.

Steamboat Willie looks to Upham for the translation.

UPHAM
Er sagt...auf Wiedersehen.

Steamboat Willie nods, turns. Miller blindfolds him, taps his shoulder. Steamboat Willie starts to walk.

Miller and his men head off in the other direction, heading up the slope of a hill. They're just about to walk from view over the crest when they glance back...

...and realize Steamboat Willie's walking blindfolded toward that one solitary tree.

MELLISH
Don't even tell me he's gonna hit that tree.

REIBEN
I think that's what I'm telling you.

SARGE
Nah, that'd be too weird.

UPHAM
I think Reiben's right, he is.

JACKSON
Buck says he misses.

REIBEN
Double or nothing says he hits.

MELLISH
I'll take that action.

SARGE
Me too...

Miller's watching bemused as his men pull money and place bets...but he's getting curious himself.

STEAMBOAT WILLIE

Is walking stoically, unaware that he's heading for a tree.

RESUME MILLER'S GROUP

As the betting concludes:

REIBEN
Okay, gentlemen, window's closed. Upham, hold the money.

Upham takes the money, clutching it. The men turn, watching. In the field below, Steamboat Willie draws nearer and nearer the tree. Everybody's holding their breath...

Steamboat Willie goes past the tree, missing it by a foot.

REIBEN (CONT'D)
Aw, shit!

JACKSON
Told you so!

MELLISH
C'mon, pay up!

The bets are settled; money changes hands amidst laughter and grumbling. They look back at Steamboat Willie. He's about ten paces past the tree -- when he suddenly trips over a rock, falling flat on his face. We hear from a distance:

STEAMBOAT WILLIE
Scheisse!

He pushes to his feet, no longer sure what direction he's going. He starts off again -- right back toward the tree.

MELLISH
Oh, no, you gotta be kidding me...

REIBEN
That's right, that's right, keep walking...

BONK! Steamboat Willie smacks right into the tree, knocks himself on his ass. A howl of LAUGHTER goes up from the men as the winnings are reversed. They look back as:

Steamboat Willie stands painfully up again, straightens his tunic. He walks off again, shoulders straight, at all times maintaining his dignity.

REIBEN (CONT'D)
Two bucks says he falls flat on his face again.

Silence. No takers. It's dawning on everybody the fun they've been having at Steamboat Willie's expense.

JACKSON
If he does, I don't wanna see it.

THE GROUP MOVES ON AS WE

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - COUNTRYSIDE (NEARING RAMELLE) - DAY

Miller and the men trudge wearily into view. They pause, gazing down...and CAMERA COMES AROUND to reveal Ramelle less than half a mile away. Things seem quiet down there.

EXT - FIELD/OUTSKIRTS OF RAMELLE - DAY

The GIs are approaching town through a field of tall grass. All seems very still and silent here, unusually so. There's nothing to greet them so far but buzzing insects.

The SOUND OF AN ENGINE brings their heads around. A GERMAN HALF-TRACK comes out of nowhere, barreling across the field with a SIX MAN SQUAD OF SUPPORTING INFANTRY running through the grass. A GERMAN GUNNER on the half-track OPENS FIRE with a MOUNTED MACHINE GUN...

The GIs take off running in the direction of town, crashing through the tall grass as BULLETS WHINE like hornets...

They reach a drainage culvert, beyond which are railroad tracks. They jump into the culvert, sliding down as bullets CHEW the lip, missing them by inches...

...they splash across the thin trickle of muddy water at the bottom of the culvert, try to scramble up the other side to the railroad tracks above...

...but MACHINE GUN BULLETS SHATTER the wooden ties, driving them back down into the ditch. Desperation time -- they're stuck in the culvert with the half-track bearing down on them from the field side, plus the six Germans on foot...

There's nothing they can do except take the bastards on. They thrust their weapons over the lip of the culvert and OPEN FIRE...for all the good it does. The half-track keeps coming with MACHINE GUN BLAZING...forty yards...thirty...twenty...

VOICE (O.S.)
HEADS DOWN!

They whirl around in surprise as --

-- a FLASH OF BAZOOKA BLOWBACK sends a projectile right over their heads. WHAM! It nails the half-track dead on, rips it apart with a FIERY BLAST. The vehicle somersaults forward in flames, flips upside-down, skids to a stop at the edge of the

Ditch right in front of their noses. And before Miller and the others can so much as blink ---- FOUR AIRBORNE TROOPERS lunge up out of the grass like phantoms and OPEN FIRE with submachine guns, raking the German infantrymen off their feet...

Silence. Miller and his men are stunned. They gaze up at the YOUNG PARATROOPER with the smoking bazooka who just saved their lives. He's tall and athletic, a good-looking blond kid kneeling on the railroad tracks, looking down at them with a touch of amusement in his eyes.

RYAN
I'm Ryan. Who are you?

OFF THEIR STUNNED LOOKS, WE

CUT TO:

EXT - RAMELLE BRIDGE - DAY

The town lies in shattered ruin from Allied bombing. Miller and his men approach the bridge escorted by Ryan and the four troopers from the field -- SANDERS, TOYNBE, WELLER, O'TOOLE.

OTHER PARATROOPERS watch them approach, a few even melting out of the woodwork as they pass. The bridge is where most of the men are; it's clearly the key spot being held. There are two heavily sandbagged machine gun emplacements -- one at each end of the bridge.

We're seeing just over a dozen paratroopers in total, all privates. And as tired as Miller and his men are, these guys look worse -- haggard, unshaven, some wounded. They look like the settlers in some western who've been holding the fort against constant Apache raids.

ON THE BRIDGE

Miller's group arrives at the bridge. CORPORAL HENDERSON (the only non-private) moves from the sandbag emplacement to meet them, flanked by RICE and TRASK.

HENDERSON
Sir, if you're our relief, I'm filing a complaint.

MILLER
Can't say I blame you. Who's your commanding officer?

Henderson cocks his head. Miller turns to look. SEVERAL DOZEN CORPSES lie covered with tarps along the riverbank.

HENDERSON
That would have been Captain Jennings, sir. I'm afraid the best we can muster right now is a corporal -- that's me, Henderson.
(beat)
What are you guys doing here?

Miller nods his head at Ryan.

MILLER
We came looking for him.

RYAN
(surprised)
Me?

MILLER
James Francis Ryan? Ohio?

RYAN
Yeah, Mansfield, Ohio. What's this about?

MILLER
I'm sorry to have tell you this, James. Your brothers have all been killed in action.

A pause as Ryan tries to absorb this. Softly:

RYAN
On the level?

MILLER
'Fraid so.

The tough paratrooper melts away, replaced by the teenage boy who just found out that the brothers he grew up with...and loved deeply...are dead.

It's certainly worth a few tears. He sheds them fairly stoically under the circumstances. The others wait. Some of Ryan's buddies look away, feeling bad. Let him get it out.

He wipes his eyes, finds his voice:

RYAN
You came all the way out here just to tell me that?

MILLER
(shakes his head)
They're sending you home. We have orders to bring you back.

RYAN
Bring me back, sir?

Miller nods. It takes Ryan a few moments to process it. It doesn't seem to make much sense to him either.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Thing is...I have orders too. And they don't include deserting my post.

MILLER
(beat)
I understand...but this changes things.

RYAN
I don't see that it does, sir.

MILLER
The Chief of Staff of the United States Army says it does.
(to all of them)
Look, you guys have been hanging on by your fingernails. Why don't you all fall back?

HENDERSON
Our orders are to hold this bridge at all costs...to the last man, if necessary. If all else fails, as an absolute last resort, we blow it up.

MILLER
Okay. Why don't we just skip the middle part and go straight to the blowing up? That way we can all get the hell out of here.

HENDERSON
Unacceptable, sir. Our people need this bridge intact, if at all possible.

Miller considers this, turns to Ryan:

MILLER
These guys want to stay, fine. But it's not your party anymore--

RYAN
--it damn well is--

MILLER
--it damn well isn't. Now I'm only saying this once, Private. You grab your gear and report within five minutes, we are moving out--

RYAN
I'm afraid I ref--

MILLER
--and don't even think of trying to refuse that order! You are denied that option!

RYAN
I don't think so, sir!

Tempers are flaring as both men get in each other's faces:

MILLER
Listen to me, you little pissant, you have no idea what we went through to find you--

RYAN
--I don't much care, I didn't ask you to find me in the first place--

MILLER
--ungrateful bastard, you get your gear and I mean now--

RYAN
--not now or any other goddamn time--

MILLER
--that is a direct order--

RYAN
--which I am refusing, sir!

They're about two heartbeats away from coming to blows. The others pull them apart, but temperatures are still hot:

RYAN (CONT'D)
Why don't you ask what we've been through? We were supposed to hold here for 48 hours! It's been a goddamn week! And what do we get? Relief? Armor support? No! We get you, with this ridiculous bullshit!

REIBEN
Hey, asshole, two of our people died looking for you!

RYAN
That supposed to be my fault?

REIBEN
You're goddamn right it is!

Now they have to be separated. Miller gets between everybody.

MILLER
What's so damn important about this bridge anyway?

HENDERSON
If the Germans roll across this bridge, there's about a hundred guys less than five miles down that road who are gonna get their asses kicked! That we cannot allow!

RYAN
(off Millers' look)
What are you worrying about me for? Start worrying about them!

MILLER
I wasn't told to keep them alive!

RYAN
We were!

REIBEN
(seething)
I say we take the son of a bitch anyway.

RYAN
What are you gonna do, shoot me?

REIBEN
Maybe that's not such a bad idea.

RYAN
Come on, infantry, try it!

Both sides are overheated, ready to go at it -- some men are even tensing up with weapons. Miller sees the volatility of the situation and holds up his hands, backing both sides off.

MILLER
Awright! Everybody count to ten!

He notices Upham scared, holding his M-1 at port arms.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Stand down, you idiot. These are Americans. You're not allowed to shoot them.

Upham lowers the rifle. Miller pauses, taking deep breaths, calming down. He regards Ryan dourly, motions to him.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Can I have a word with you? Sarge, you want to sit in on this?

Ryan hesitates, joins them. They walk past Miller's men to the mouth of the bridge where they can talk privately. Sarge hovers just within earshot as:

MILLER (CONT'D)
I've been getting people killed ever since I set foot in this goddamn cheese-eating country. Why can't you be the exception?

RYAN
Would you go?

MILLER
(beat)
Absolutely. I would absolutely go.

Ryan searches Miller's eyes, and smiles.

RYAN
You're not a very good liar, sir.

Miller blinks -- nobody ever accused him of that before. Ryan searches for the right words, and it's as simple as:

RYAN (CONT'D)
These guys here? They're the only brothers I have left. There's no way I'm deserting them.

Ryan turns, walks back past Miller's men, re-joins the paratroopers at the barricade. Miller's completely at a loss, stares off across the river. Sarge moves to his side, still speaking privately:

SARGE
What are your orders, sir?

MILLER
Sergeant. We have crossed some strange boundary. Life has taken a turn for the surreal.

SARGE
Clearly, sir. But the question stands.

MILLER
What do you think?

SARGE
You don't really want to know, sir.

MILLER
Mike. I really do.

Sarge hesitates, sees his sincerity, sighs.

SARGE
All this time we've been looking for this kid...most of us hating him, Reiben wanting him dead...I couldn't help thinking: what if this is what the whole war's about for us? What if we look back on this as old men, assuming we live, and figure that saving Private Ryan was the one decent and worthwhile thing we were able to pull out of this whole godawful shitty mess?
(beat)
That's what I was thinking, sir.

Miller takes this in.

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MILLER
You sound like Wade.

SARGE
Who's Wade, sir? I didn't think you knew a Wade.

In that quiet moment, something clicks. Miller couldn't even put words to it if you asked, but it's there. He turns, goes back to the others. Everybody waits for him to speak.

MILLER (CONT'D)
How do you propose to prevent the Germans from crossing this bridge?

HENDERSON
What's it to you, sir?

MILLER
It's become obvious to me that staying is the only hope I have of keeping Private Ryan alive.

The men are stunned, especially Reiben:

REIBEN
You gotta be shitting me--!

Miller whirls, cuts him off fiercely:

MILLER
Not a word out of you, Reiben! Not a goddamn word!
(turns back)
Tell me the plan.

HENDERSON
We've got the machine gun emplacements you see...plus we mined the road through town...

MILLER
Machine guns and mines. Good, that'll slow 'em down for thirty seconds, what else?
(off their silence)
You think they're gonna come at us with donkey carts? If this bridge is vital to us, you can be damn sure it's vital to them. So far they've been picking on you with a little infantry, but when they come for real, they'll be coming with tanks. Now exactly what do we intend to do about it?

OFF THEIR LOOKS, WE

CUT TO:

Weapons and explosives are laid out on the ground, arrayed for inspection. ANGLE UP to Miller and Sarge as:

TRASK
This is everything. Five thirty caliber machine guns, seventeen grenades, eleven anti-personnel mines, four bazookas with less than a dozen rounds, the flamethrower, assorted M-1s and Thompsons...

RICE
Might as well be pea-shooters if they roll on us with tanks.

Everybody knows he's right. Sarge notices Miller staring off down the road that curves from sight through town.

SARGE
What are you thinking, sir?

MILLER
I'm thinking they're gonna come rolling right up the middle of that road and flatten us...
(points)
...unless we can disable the lead tank there...between those buildings, Where the rubble makes a bottleneck.

RYAN
Disable him?

MILLER
Yeah, you know, turn him into a 60 ton roadblock. We do that, the tanks behind him will have to leave the road and try to get around. That Means plowing through some buildings.

Tall order, even for tanks.

The others are starting to get it, to see the potential:

HENDERSON
Yeah. We can split 'em up that way, make 'em more vulnerable...take 'em on while they're bogged down in the rubble...

MILLER
...right, hit 'em hard, one on one, keep falling back toward the bridge.

SARGE
I'd say three machine gun teams to pin down their infantry...two for displacement, number three up in belltower. Piss a little bad news down on their heads.

MILLER
Good idea. Jackson, you could use some company up there, right?

JACKSON
I'm guessing that makes me spotter?

MILLER
Well, I was hoping you could pin the tail on a few German officers for me, long as you're up there.

Jackson flexes his wounded arm. Miller looks for reactions.

REIBEN
It's not the worst idea ever, sir...it's just that everything depends on knocking out that lead tank, right?
(Miller nods)
How exactly do we do that?

SARGE
Reiben's right. As our esteemed colleague in Airborne pointed out, what we got here are peashooters. So how do we stop the tank?

MILLER
Sticky bomb.

That puts a pause in the conversation. Everybody looks at Miller like he's nuts.

RYAN
Sticky bomb, sir?

HENDERSON
You're making that up.

MILLER
It's in the manual of arms, you can check it yourself.

RYAN
We would, sir, if we had a manual of arms handy. Lacking one, perhaps you could enlighten us.

MILLER
You have TNT?

TOYNBE
That's the one thing we got plenty of. Stanz and I wired the bridge with enough combination B to blow it up twice.

MILLER
Then you can spare some. What you do is, you take a standard issue GI sock, cram as much TNT into it as you can, rig a simple fuse, then coat the whole thing with axle grease. That way, when you throw it, it sticks. Sticky bomb.
(off their looks)
You think of another way to knock the treads off a tank?

Looks are traded -- no, they can't.

REIBEN
Great. Now we gotta give up our socks.

CUT TO:

SEQUENCE OF BATTLE PREPARATIONS: UNDER THE BRIDGE

Toynbe and Stanz (the 17 year-old paratrooper that Ryan helped hook up during the parachute drop at the beginning of the movie) are dangling in harnesses under the bridge, working on a network of ropes. They're pulling down TNT charges, handing them across to Sanders and O'Toole, who relay them up to --

ON THE BRIDGE

-- Upham and Mellish, who bring them to Miller and a row of men. There's a sticky bomb assembly line happening. Sarge stuffs a sock full of TNT, hands it off to someone.

SARGE
I feel like goddamn Santa Claus...

CHURCH BELLTOWER

Jackson emerges from the trapdoor, turns back, takes his sniper rifle as somebody hands it up. Next comes a thirty caliber machine gun. CAMERA SHIFTS to the trapdoor to reveal Parker and Weller on the ladder below, relaying up ammo belts, satchels of supplies...

IN THE RUBBLE

Machine Gun Team #1 consists of two Airborne troopers named LYLE and FALLON. They're picking a spot, settling in, sighting their barrel down the street. Upham appears with four ammo belts, gives them two, moves on...

...and we follow him as he hurries through the rubble to Machine Gun Team #2: Mellish and Henderson are positioning their weapon "inside" a collapsed building, angling the muzzle through what used to be a window. Mellish starts oiling the bolt, working it back and forth.

MELLISH
Upham, listen to me. You listening? When the shit comes down, we'll be displacing and falling back like crazy sons of bitches, so you gotta be Johnny-on-the-spot with the ammo, understand?

Upham takes a deep breath, nods. Mellish ruffles his hair.

MELLISH (CONT'D)
Hey. Everybody's scared...

MOUTH OF THE BRIDGE

Miller strides from town with a group that includes Sarge and Henderson, checking angles of fire. They stop at the first sandbagged emplacement just past the bridge entrance.

MILLER
Machine gun number four looks good right here...not bad for a forward position...

He looks out across the bridge to the emplacement at the far end. Machine gun #5.

MILLER (CONT'D)
That one over there? That's the Alamo. They push us back that far...last man alive blows the bridge.

TOYNBE
We got a 30 second delay on the switch. If you're that last man, better get off the bridge fast or you won't be alive for long.

The others nod grimly. Ryan looks to Miller.

RYAN
Where am I during all this?

MILLER
Never more than two feet away from me. That's not negotiable.

ALONG THE STREET

Demolition teams are carefully hiding the anti-personnel mines along walls, behind shutters, in window boxes. They're angling the devices to blow out into the street on the horizontal to take down some infantry...

IN THE RUBBLE

Men are picking positions, hunkering in the rubble, finding lines of sight toward the street...

CHURCH BELLTOWER

Parker's got himself a machine gun nest now, muzzle aimed down

Through the balusters.

ANGLE TO

Jackson as he sweeps his sniper rifle up and over the balustrade, targeting one end of the street to the other, eye pressed to the scope, checking freedom of movement. He does it again, practicing the move...

SEQUENCE ENDS AS WE

CUT TO:

EXT - RAMELLE - DAY

Midday at its hottest. The air is motionless. For that matter, so is everything else. The buildings stand mute and desolate. Nothing's buzzing except the flies. Even the river seems to be holding its breath.

ON THE BRIDGE/FORWARD EMPLACEMENT

The men sit waiting, suffering the heat, everybody quiet with their thoughts. Ryan breaks the silence:

RYAN
What were the names of the guys who got killed coming up here?

None of Miller's men answer. They look to Miller, knowing the subject is taboo. Miller surprises them by responding:

MILLER
Caparzo and Wade. Wade was our medic.

RYAN
Good men?

Miller looks to the others -- tell him.

SARGE
The best.

RYAN NODS, PAUSES. SOFTLY:

RYAN
My brothers would kick my ass if they knew somebody died trying to keep me alive.

They all look at him. He smiles sadly. Even Reiben smiles back. Ryan glances to Miller and innocently asks:

RYAN (CONT'D)
Where you from, Captain?

A long beat. Smiles are growing on the faces of Miller's men as they wait -- is he gonna answer? Ryan picks up that something's going on, though he's not sure exactly what.

MILLER
I'm afraid that's classified.

The others give Ryan pointed looks -- do not let him get away with that. Ryan's catching on, decides to have some fun:

RYAN
That's not fair, is it? You know where I'm from. Mansfield, Ohio.
(off Miller's look)
You come all this way, you risk your life for me, you won't even tell me where you're from?

Miller knows he's trapped. His men are all wearing big shit-eating grins, waiting.

REIBEN
If you lie, you go to hell.

Miller takes a final pause, then:

MILLER
Addley, Pennsylvania. High school English teacher.

A beat. Then the chuckling starts...and builds. Miller's men can't believe it. They start laughing harder as it sinks in.

REIBEN
I enlisted to get away from people like you...

This gets them laughing even harder -- and you can damn well believe it feels good. As the laughter starts to die:

MILLER
I also coach the baseball team.

This sets them off again into renewed gales of laughter. Reiben's holding himself, trying to breathe, falls over ---- and a CRAZED SCREAM freezes the laughter in their throats and the blood in their veins. They scramble to the sandbags, snatching up weapons, gazing toward town...

...where two lunatics are racing from the rubble with a heavy rectangular wooden object on their shoulders. They're weaving, damn near losing their balance, hollering every step of the way. There's a third man bringing up the rear, his arms loaded down with a stack of...something.

SARGE
What the hell?

It's a trio of paratroopers: Sanders, GARRITY, WILSON. Miller and the others come off the bridge as they race up, almost dropping the wooden object. A couple of guys jump in, help them ease the object to the ground -- a Victrola.

MELLISH
Holy Magee, does it work?

GARRITY
Does it ever! And brother, that's not all -- look!

Wilson runs up with the stack in his arms -- records.

HENDERSON
Stacks of wax!

WILSON
Not just any wax! It's the real deal, boys...
(shuffling them)
...Stan Kenton, the Dorseys, Les Elgart, Jimmie Lunceford...

They all see it at the same time and shout it at the sky together:

ALL THE MEN
BENNNYY GOOODMAAANNN!

MILLER AND SARGE

Are watching this crazed activity -- the men are swarming around the Victrola, excited as hell, elbows flying as they try to get the thing cranked up.

Sarge gives Miller a look -- do I stop this? Miller shakes his head, reponds gently:

MILLER
Let 'em.

Sarge knows what Miller's thinking -- this could be the last fun these boys ever have.

THE VICTROLA

Starts spinning. The record is placed on the spindle. TILT UP to all the excited faces. The needle descends and:

"Sing, Sing, Sing" begins. That awesome drum intro followed by those teasing, ramping horns. Pure hormonal, musical joy. The men crowd around the Victrola, shouting and laughing, jiving to the tune. Those horns are slipping and sliding, the drum pounding like crazed tom-toms...

...and for a brief moment there is no war here. There's just a bunch of boys having the time of their lives, grabbing the maximum amount of joy they can...

...while it lasts.

MILLER

Is the first to sense it. He gazes off, listening, smile fading. Something's throbbing in the air...something besides drums. What the hell is that?

Sarge senses it too. Something under the music. Miller gets down off the sandbags, walks over the Victrola.

Some of the men are starting to hear it now...they're pausing, listening. Stanz and Reiben are still dancing, oblivious.

Miller lifts the Victrola needle. Dead silence...

...except for the DEEP RUMBLE OF DIESEL ENGINES coming this way. A pause, a breathless hush...

MILLER (CONT'D)
Here they come.

...and the men scramble toward town to get ready for battle.

CHURCH BELLTOWER

Jackson and Parker are tense as hell as the RUMBLING GROWS EVER LOUDER. DIESEL FUMES are rippling over the rooftops, coming this way, distorting the air with heat haze.

VARIOUS ANGLES IN TOWN

As the Americans prepare. Cocking weapons. Sighting down muzzles. Crouching in debris. Ducking past broken shutters.

MILLER'S POSITION

Is the building nearest the square and the bridge. Ryan's at his side, with Sarge and Toynbe. Miller raises binoculars --

BINOCULAR POV: BELLTOWER

-- and brings Jackson into focus. Jackson's peering off through his rifle scope to see what's coming.

IN THE BELLTOWER

JACKSON
I'm seeing Tigers. Two of 'em.

Parker relays this using hands signals -- he holds up two fingers, then makes a "T" with his hands...

MILLER

Has his binoculars riveted to the belltower. Parker holds up two fingers again, and this time makes a "P."

MILLER
Two tigers. Two panzers. Four total.

MELLISH AND HENDERSON

Are at their machine gun, also watching the belltower.

MELLISH
Tigers. Shit. It hadda be Tigers.

VARIOUS ANGLES

The ground itself is starting to vibrate. Bits of plaster and debris start breaking loose, drifting from the rafters...

THE LEAD TANK

Looms into view around the curve of the street...huge. A King Tiger. It rumbles and clanks like a prehistoric monster, treads Crushing the cobblestones to dust. Riding the turret is a haughty S.S. tank commander we've seen before -- Major Hoess. TANK #2 now looms into sight: another Tiger. On the heels of that come TANKS #3 and #4: a pair of Panzers.

Trooping along in the wake of the armor is a COMPANY OF WEHRMACHT INFANTRY about a hundred men strong. Steamboat Willie is among them, toting a Schmeisser.

CHURCH BELLTOWER

Jackson and Parker peer down as the procession passes awesomely below. It looks like really bad news from up here.

SIX "STICKY BOMB" MEN

Are hidden in various positions along both sides of the street, sticky bombs ready. Reiben is one of them...plus Wilson, Henderson, Weller, Garrity, Trask. The bombs are gooey and bizarre, like big globs of grease with fuses.

MILLER'S GROUP

Toynbe's got his hand on a detonator switch, eyes riveted to Miller, waiting for the signal. Miller has his hand poised, watching the lead tank gets closer...wait...wait...wait...

...now. Toynbe throws the switch --

ANGLE ON STREET

-- and thunderous hell breaks loose as the ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES DETONATE massively along both sides of the street. The walls blow out toward the infantry, taking them down with concussion and shrapnel, killing at least a dozen men...

The MACHINE GUNS OPEN FIRE at the same moment, turning the street into a killing zone:

MACHINE GUN #1: Lyle and Fallon are raking the street from one direction...

MACHINE GUN #2: Mellish and Henderson hammer the infantry from another direction...

MACHINE GUN #3: Parker is spraying the street from up in the belltower, raining bullets down on the Germans. Jackson is next to him, drawing a sniper's bead on Major Hoess...

THE LEAD TANK

Major Hoess ducks down into the turret and pulls the hatch shut...just as Jackson's bullet WHANGS off the metal. Missed the bastard. The tank keeps rolling as:

THE SIX STICKY BOMBERS

Swarm from the rubble on both sides of the street, fuses smoking, running alongside the tank. They hurl their sticky bombs onto the treads -- then veer off and run like hell, scrambling back into the rubble, trying to gain precious seconds. Tank #2 OPENS FIRE on them with its forward machine gun. Wilson is TORN BY BULLETS and goes down...

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! The sticky bombs DETONATE, blowing gouts of flame sideways over both sides of the street, and for an unnerving moment or two we figure nothing happened because the tank just keeps going ---- but then the tread rips apart on one side, throwing up massive steel links. The tank skids, slewing to one side, wheels spinning. It stops, tries going in reverse -- but that throws even more tread off...

The lead tank just became a 60 ton roadblock (though still able to fire). The other tanks jam up behind, slamming on their brakes.

INSIDE THE TANKS

TANK CREWS are shouting, looking for targets, trying to find a way around. A VOICE cuts through the noise on the radio:

HOESS (filtered on radio)
Dreht die Kanonen um!

ALL FOUR TANK TURRETS

Start cranking, muzzles coming around and leveling at the surrounding buildings.

IN THE CRIPPLED LEAD TANK

Major Hoess finds a target, hollers into his headset:

HOESS
FEUER!

THE TANKS

Start BLASTING at the surrounding buildings, punching storms of debris through the air, each muzzle-blast a thunderclap.

MILLER'S POSITION

Miller and the others are ducking and covering as debris hurtles and the tanks FIRE AWAY b.g.

THE AMERICANS

Scramble and dive in the rubble as the tanks methodically blast the living shit out of the area. An EXPLOSION catches O'toole on the run, killing him instantly.

THE GERMAN INFANTRY

Is scrambling, pulling their wounded off the road, swarming into the rubble, taking cover, OPENING FIRE...

THE THREE REAR TANKS

Start backing up, still FIRING as they go. Stanz rears from the rubble with a bazooka, FIRES at Tank #2. The projectile WHOOSHES, deflects off the turret, EXPLODES against the building opposite -- and the building collapses, dropping a ton of wall down on the tank. Tank #2 lurches, keeps backing up, getting clear of the debris. Muzzle cranking this way. Still operational. Stanz runs for it. WHUMP! The EXPLOSION is stunning. We don't even see what happened to Stanz.

The tanks lurch forward and veer off in various directions, leaving the road and heading through the rubble.

MILLER

Sees it happening, shouts to the others:

MILLER
Let's go!

IN THE RUBBLE

The German infantry is trying to press forward. The Americans are hitting them with everything they've got:

MACHINE GUN TEAM #1

Is hammering them with bullets...but the Germans are pressing closer, threatening to overwhelm them.

LYLE
DISPLACE!

They use rags to pick up the machine gun -- the barrel's hot enough to char the cloth. They fall back to another spot...

UPHAM

Comes racing through the rubble with ammo belts, terrified as the world gets shot to pieces around him. He comes to Mellish and Henderson as they also get pushed back:

MELLISH
DISPLACING!

They haul the sizzling-hot machine gun off its perch, fall back frantically under heavy fire. They come to a new spot, slam the machine gun down, RESUME FIRING...

CHURCH BELLTOWER

Parker BLAZES AWAY with his machine gun. Jackson's got his eye to his scope, picking targets below, FIRING.

Jackson ducks back as BULLETS CHEW the lip of the balustrade to splinters. Parker gives him a tense look -- they know we're up here.

IN THE RUBBLE

Miller appears, flattens against a wall. Here comes Tank #3, a Panzer, plowing through what used to be somebody's living room in an eruption of shattering plaster and lathe.

The tank reaches a stone wall and bogs down, grinding against rock, struggling to get through. Miller turns, motions -- Rice and Sanders race past him with sticky bombs, bobbing through the rubble. Ryan tries to go too, but:

MILLER
Not you.

Ryan wants to argue, but they see German infantry coming. They OPEN FIRE to cover Sanders and Rice, pinning the Germans down.

The tank is maneuvering, grinding, moments from battering through. Sanders and Rice come running and ducking. They pause at the tank, get the fuses going ---- and one of the sticky bombs DETONATES PREMATURELY. Sanders and Rice literally VAPORIZE. The BLAST knocks over walls and slams Miller and Ryan to the ground. They roll over, stunned and horrified...as the Panzer grinds on, unharmed.

THE BATTLE

Rages on in the rubble. The German infantry is swarming, FIRING, pushing forward by inches or yards...

The machine gun teams are HAMMERING AWAY at them, displacing, falling back, hammering away again. Upham is shuttling ammo to both teams, running like crazy through the rubble...

Trask surprises a SQUAD OF ADVANCING GERMANS with the FLAMETHROWER, hosing a stunning stream of fire through the rubble, setting men afire in a hell of mushrooming smoke...

The tanks keep plowing inexorably along, battering their way through, turrets swiveling, picking targets, FIRING and taking down obstacles in their path almost at random...

ANGLE ON TANK #4

The other Panzer. Here it comes, grinding through the rubble. Sticky bombers swarm out to ambush it -- Reiben, Weller, Toynbe, Garrity. They slam-dunk their bombs onto the treads and run like hell --WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! The sticky bombs shoot GOUTS OF FLAME, knocking Reiben head-over-heels into the rubble...

He rises on his elbows, dazed, trying to clear his head. He turns, rolls over to look at the tank ---- and is horrified to see it come through unharmed, still rolling. It swerves toward him. He scrambles desperately, Trying to get out of its path, but his head's still spinning and he's not going to make it --A bazooka projectile WHOOSHES up the tank's ass and blows out the engine. The tank stutters and hitches, groans to a stop.

Reiben looks past the tank -- and sees Stanz about twenty yards back. Stanz is filthy, covered with soot, perched on some rubble with a smoking bazooka in his hands. Their eyes meet for a moment -- Stanz gives him a shy little smile -- and then he's gone, ducking out of sight like a ferret.

The turret hatch lifts. A PANZER CREWMAN pops up with a Luger, shoots Toynbe dead. He turns, sees Reiben, aims...and a BULLET BLOWS through the crewman's chest, killing him instantly.

Reiben looks around, realizes the shot came from:

THE CHURCH BELLTOWER

Jackson just saved Reiben's ass. He works his rifle bolt and turns away, scanning for other targets...

REIBEN

Is stunned. His life's been saved twice within a span of moments. He joins the others as they swarm up onto the tank. CREWMAN #2 is emerging, but Weller shoots him. Pins are popped, grenades tossed in. A CONCUSSIVE BLAST kicks up.

THE CHURCH BELLTOWER

Jackson has his eye to the scope, scanning the street for another target...

RIFLE SCOPE POV

...and he brings the crippled lead tank into view, still blocking the middle of the street. The Tiger's turret is cranking around, the muzzle is raising -- right at the belltower.

UPR-166

JACKSON

Pulls his eye from the scope...a heartbeat of stunned horror as he realizes:

JACKSON
PARKER, RUN!

They scramble for the trapdoor, trying to get down, knowing they'll never make it in time...

THE CRIPPLED LEAD TANK

FIRES A THUNDERCLAP BLAST AND:

THE BELLTOWER

Vanishes in a STUNNING FIREBALL of hurtling debris. Gone.

THE CRIPPLED LEAD TANK

Adjusts its muzzle down -- and FIRES AGAIN, blowing the rest of the tower to smithereens. TILT DOWN to Mellish and Henderson in the rubble f.g., staring over their machine gun in horror.

MELLISH
Jackson! Goddamn it!

HENDERSON
(looks at the tank)
It ain't enough to knock the treads off! We gotta take the son of a bitch out!

Mellish FIRES A BURST, sends some Germans scurrying for cover.

MELLISH
Yeah? How?

Henderson pulls a grenade. He's got an idea -- whatever it is, he's about to try it.

MELLISH (CONT'D)
You nuts? It's a Tiger! Grenades don't mean nothin'!

HENDERSON
Maybe. Keep me covered...

Henderson dashes toward the street, weaving through the rubble. Mellish KEEPS FIRING, pinning the Germans down.

Henderson crouches near the crippled tank, pulls the pin, holds the grenade tight. Waiting. The muzzle is turning, adjusting, seeking another target...

SPR-166

INSIDE THE TURRET

HOESS FINDS A TARGET AND:

HOESS
FEUER!

HENDERSON

Ducks, forearms pressed to his ears against the awesome MUZZLE BLAST. That's his cue -- he lunges over the rubble and runs straight at the tank. He jumps up and hooks his arm around the muzzle, slam-dunking the grenade down the barrel...

INSIDE THE TANK

...as a GERMAN CREWMAN opens the breach and extracts the spent shell casing...

INSIDE THE MUZZLE

...and the grenade comes rolling/clattering down the long dark tunnel of the barrel...

INSIDE THE TANK

...the crewman turns back with a fresh shell to reload -- and is stunned to see a grenade drop out of the breach at his feet. WHAM! The BLAST turns the screen white with a concussive hammerblow of echoing steel...

HENDERSON

Scrambles up on the tank with another grenade. The hatch opens with a billow of smoke. Major Hoess rises into view, bleeding from the ears and nose, in shock. Henderson drives him back down with an elbow to the face, drops the grenade in, slams the hatch. Another BLAST kicks up -- BOOM/CLANG!

MELLISH

Is truly stunned. Henderson jumps off the tank and runs back through the rubble, hollering and exultant --

HENDERSON
Holy shit, did you see that? Took those sons of bitches out--

-- and German MACHINE GUN BULLETS rip across him, spinning him dead to the ground.

MELLISH
HENDERSON!

Mellish RESUMES FIRING, screaming in anguish, raking bullets at the German positions...

...and his ammo belt runs out. That's the last of it. German bullets spatter the rubble, driving him down. He grabs an M-1 and falls back, running for his life...

IN ANOTHER AREA

Tank #2, the other Tiger, comes awesomely through a wall, ramping up and slamming back down again...

...as Miller and Ryan come running, ducking past shattered walls. They find Sarge and Garrity lying in wait for the tank. Garrity has a bazooka aimed.

SARGE
AIM FOR THE TREADS!

Garrity FIRES. The projectile connects and EXPLODES -- but the tank keeps coming, unaffected.

MILLER
FALL BACK! FALL BACK!

SARGE
GO! GO!

They run for their lives as the Tiger comes crashing after them. The FORWARD MACHINE GUN OPENS FIRE, swiveling and chattering. Garrity gets shot in the back and goes down, the tank rolling right over him, grinding him under...

MACHINE GUN TEAM #1

Fallon and Lyle are on their last ammo belt. A potato-masher comes spinning toward them, EXPLODES. German soldiers swarm forward as the smoke clears, overrunning their position...

IN ANOTHER AREA

Mellish comes running with his M-1. He sees Upham ahead --

MELLISH
UPHAM! RUN!

-- and suddenly a German soldier darts into Mellish's path. Both men freeze, staring at each other in stunned disbelief.

It's Steamboat Willie. The world stops for a heartbeat of time. Both men frozen. Are we friends? Are we enemies?

They both swing their weapons up simultaneously. Steamboat Willie is faster -- BRRAAAAAAAP! Mellish is driven back as BULLETS SLAM a bloody pattern into his stomach. He goes down hard, dead before he even hits the ground.

Steamboat Willie spins, turning his Schmeisser on Upham -- but Upham has a .45 pistol aimed. BLAM!BLAM!BLAM! Massive holes punch into Steamboat Willie's chest as he arcs back into the rubble, FIRING A BURST at the sky.

Upham stares at the two dead men in shock. Reiben appears at his side with his B.A.R., realizes what just happened.

REIBEN
C'mon, Upham, we gotta fall back.

Upham is slow to move. Reiben pulls him along, FIRING his B.A.R. to cover their retreat...

AREA LEADING TO SQUARE

Miller comes zig-zagging through the rubble with Ryan and Sarge, heading for the square...

...and here comes the Tiger bashing through. Trask hits it with the FLAMETHROWER. FIRE AND SMOKE mushroom skyward. Trask hits the trigger again -- and runs out of fuel. He frantically shrugs out of the harness, turns, runs for his life.

IN THE SQUARE

The surviving soldiers race into the square -- Miller, Ryan, Sarge, Trask. Reiben and Upham appear too, everybody heading for the bridge...

Weller's already there, in the forward sandbag emplacement, racking the bolt of the machine gun...

The Tiger BLOWS THROUGH A WALL with its cannon and comes thundering into the square, treads grinding through a massive turn. The forward MACHINE GUN OPENS FIRE, swiveling, tracking the runners...

THE RUNNERS

...but everybody else makes it to the emplacement, throwing themselves over as INCOMING MACHINE GUN FIRE rips the sandbags.

The Panzer enters down at the other end of the square. Both tanks closing in now, backed by some infantry.

Weller OPENS FIRE with the machine gun. Ryan snatches up a bazooka, lays it over the lip, aims for the Tiger. Miller loads, pounds him on the helmet. Ryan FIRES. The projectile EXPLODES ineffectually off the treads.

RYAN
Reload!

SARGE
We'll take it! You fall back!

Sarge gives Miller a look -- go, get him back there.

MILLER
You be right behind us!

SARGE
Count on it!

Ryan and Miller grab whatever they can, leaving the forward emplacement and racing across the bridge...

Sarge levels the bazooka over the sandbags. Reiben loads, pounds his shoulder. Sarge FIRES. This one also EXPLODES with no effect. Both tanks keep coming.

SARGE (CONT'D)
FALL BACK!

They bail out in a big-ass hurry, grabbing whatever they can and running for it. Weller stays on the machine gun, BLASTING AWAY to provide some cover...

THE TIGER

Swivels its muzzle toward the emplacement...

WELLER

Abandons the machine gun, running after the others. The forward emplacement EXPLODES in a swirling ball of flame, sandbags, and debris. Weller is caught by the blast and thrown, dying as he slams off the pavement...

THE LAST SANDBAG EMPLACEMENT

At the far end of the bridge. The Alamo. Ryan and Miller come running and throw themselves over the sandbags. Miller grabs the last bazooka, hollers to Ryan:

MILLER
Connect those wires!

Miller lays the bazooka over the sandbags, waiting for the first tank. Behind him, Ryan frantically connects the wires to the detonator, spinning the wingnuts...

Sarge and the others are running up the bridge toward us. Behind them, the Tiger lumbers hugely into view...

MILLER (CONT'D)
RUN!

The Tiger's forward MACHINE GUN OPENS FIRE, ripping bullets up the pavement. The runners throw themselves in all directions for whatever cover they can find. Trask is hit in the leg and goes down. Sarge grabs him, drags him behind a buttress --

MILLER (CONT'D)
DOWN!

-- as Miller FIRES THE BAZOOKA. The projectile rips down the length of bridge past the men and EXPLODES against the front of the Tiger. No effect. Miller desperately reloads as --

SARGE
GO! GO!

-- the men keep running, dragging Trask along the ground. The tank's machine gun OPENS FIRE AGAIN. Sarge is hit in the back and goes down.

REIBEN
SARGE!

MILLER
GODDAMN IT!

Miller FIRES THE BAZOOKA AGAIN. The last round. It EXPLODES off the tank as harmlessly as the others.

Reiben and Upham jump to their feet, now dragging two wounded men, going all out...

...and then the Tiger FIRES ITS CANNON. THE EXPLOSION TEARS THE WORLD APART, spinning it upside-down, ripping the air with heat and shrapnel...

...and everything goes quiet, as if the sound has drained out of the world. We're left with sounds that are remote, faint, surreal, disembodied...

SLOW MOTION SEQUENCE

...as we find Sarge dead through swirling dust. Somebody crawls to him -- it's Upham, dazed and disoriented, glasses cracked. He looks over and sees Reiben through a swirl of haze and smoke, using a bridge buttress for cover, one side of his face blackened. He's motioning -- c'mon, get off the middle of the bridge, for God's sakes. Upham looks back, sees:

THE MUZZLE OF THE TANK

Emerging from the smoke with a surreal howl...

UPHAM

Starts crawling, trying to get to Reiben...

THE SANDBAGGED EMPLACEMENT

Is a tumbled mess, everything strewn and smoking. Ryan and Miller rise into view, battered and stunned, hearing the tank coming: a bizarre animalistic howl echoes faintly up the bridge. They reach for the toppled .30 caliber machine gun...

REIBEN

Reaches out, grabs Upham's hand, pulls him in. They cling together, huddling behind the buttress...

RYAN AND MILLER

Slam the machine gun atop the sandbags. Ryan works the bolt (a sound we do hear: a big, echoing CLACK-CLATCH) and OPENS FIRE. The muzzle blast of the machine gun is silent, all we hear is the bolt whacking back and forth, the shells ejecting with a faint metallic shriek...

THE TIGER TANK

Fills the screen. It lets off a bizarre howl, more animalistic than ever. If you closed your eyes, you could picture it with

Teeth and claws...

MILLER

Watches the monster approach, sees:

THE TANK'S FORWARD MACHINE GUN

Swiveling, taking aim...

MILLER

Throws his arms over Ryan, shoving him down out of the path of the bullets -- and Miller takes several rounds in the chest. They fall from sight together...

REIBEN AND UPHAM

See Miller go down, soundlessly screaming his name...

MILLER

Rises up wounded...playing out the final, grueling, inevitable moments...moving in a litany of pain...raising his .45 automatic...the only weapon left to him...

...firing...one round after another...knowing the futility but pumping the trigger anyway...pistol jumping soundlessly in his fist...running the magazine down to the final round...

...he FIRES the final bullet...

...and sees the Tiger EXPLODE. MASSIVE GOUTS OF FLAME blow soundlessly over the sides of the bridge -- and a SECONDARY EXPLOSION blasts the Tiger's turret up into the air like a flaming pinwheel; it slams off the side of the bridge, taking a chunk with it, crashing hugely into the water...

...Miller stares slack in amazement...looks at the pistol in his hand...wondering for a brief moment if such a thing is even possible...

...and then he starts to hear them. He gazes up. Here they come, descending like voices from above, building to a choral crescendo...

RESUME NORMAL SPEED AND SOUND:

...as a pair of P-51 MUSTANGS swoop grandly over the bridge. Tank-busters. They peel overhead, no longer with the sound of voices, but with a THROATY ROAR OF PACKARD ENGINES.

REIBEN AND UPHAM

See the planes coming around for another pass. The Panzer is

Desperately trying to back off the bridge as the Tiger burns. Reiben and Upham come limping/running up the bridge...

...and find Miller dying in Ryan's arms.

REIBEN
...Captain...oh god...

They drop to their knees, grabbing onto Miller as if that simple gesture might keep him alive, anguish bursting like a dam. Reiben screams at the sky. Upham breaks down in tears.

Down at the far end of the bridge, the Panzer DETONATES with a superheated ball of flame. Both tanks destroyed. The Mustangs ROAR past, rising up into a steep climb.

MILLER

Is staring at the clouds, unable to speak. He raises a bloody hand, pointing up. Ryan follows the gesture, looks up to see:

THE P-51s Climbing together, damn near vertical, straining magnificently at the apex of their climb.

MILLER

Is trying to speak. Tears are streaming down Ryan's face.

RYAN
They're tank-busters, sir. P-51s.

Miller may not have heard him. His breath is leaving his body...a bare whisper:

MILLER
...angels...on our shoulders...

His hand flails up. Ryan catches it. Their fingers clasp. Their eyes meet, and the last thing Miller says is:

MILLER (CONT'D)
...earn this...

LONG LENS OF BRIDGE

Ryan, Reiben, and Upham sit with Miller's body, smoke drifting gently across the river. The first of the Sherman tanks appear b.g. from the treeline, coming toward the bridge with waves of supporting infantry as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - ALLIED CEMETERY AT NORMANDY - PRESENT DAY

The old man is staring at a grave marker with tears streaming down his face. He wipes his face, composes himself.

OLD MAN
I have my family with me. My son and his wife...my grandkids. I have a daughter in Seattle. She's got a family too. All good people. I'm sorry you couldn't have known them.

LITTLE BOY (O.S.)
Grampa!

The old man turns, looks back. A short distance away stands the little boy. The old man motions for him to wait. He turns back to the gravestone, the tears still coming. An intense swirl of emotions on his face. Softly:

OLD MAN
I did try to earn it, sir. I tried the best I could...

The old man stands a moment longer, then gives the gravestone a heartfelt salute. He turns and goes back to his grandson. Together, they head off down the rows hand in hand toward the waiting family...

CAMERA COMES AROUND on the grave marker, which bears the name "Captain John Miller." It sits silently as it has for over fifty years in this well-tended place as we

FADE OUT THE END